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## THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

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# THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

A study in the history of Christian doctrine  
since Kant

*Hulsean Lectures, 1936*

by

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1938

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*To*

MY WIFE





## CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
I. Introductory	i
II. The Christology of Romanticism	19
III. Process and Incarnation	41
IV. Creeds, Confessions and the new Learning	62
V. The fact of Christ	83
VI. The problem of Revelation	103
VII. The Divinity of Jesus Christ	119
<i>Index of names</i>	145



## *PREFACE*

This book includes the substance of the six lectures which I delivered in Cambridge as Hulsean Lecturer in the Lent Term 1936. Except for some few modifications and expansions I have reproduced the first five lectures in the form in which I delivered them. The sixth lecture I have entirely recast, using the material in the sixth and seventh sections of this book.

I frequently discussed the subject-matter of these lectures with my friend and colleague, the Rev. J. S. Boys Smith, both at the time when I was preparing them for delivery, and again later when I was revising them for publication. I am much indebted to those conversations, though of course I am alone responsible for the opinions which I express. Mr Boys Smith has further enhanced my obligations to him by suggesting a number of amendments at the proof stage. I wish also to acknowledge help in reading the proofs which I have received from my father-in-law Canon A. L. Lilley, and from my wife.

I have followed the usage of the English Bible in the printing of pronouns and relatives which refer to God and to Jesus Christ, except that in quoting from other writers I have reproduced their own usage.

My subject is of course a very large one and the treatment of it has of necessity been selective. I am well aware that there are gaps and that some not inconsiderable theologians who have dealt with the doctrine

of the Person of Christ in the course of the last century and a half are not even mentioned. But I believe that I have discussed representatives of all the main tendencies in Christological doctrine within the period.

J. M. CREED

THE COLLEGE  
ELY

*March 1938*

# I

## INTRODUCTORY

It is my final aim in these lectures to approach and, if it may be so, to clarify, the high theme of the doctrine of Our Lord's Person in the Church of this our age. But my method will be indirect. I propose to pass in review the main types of interpretation of his Person which have proved themselves to be significant in theological thought since the close of the eighteenth century. It is unlikely that we shall be able to appropriate any one of these types of interpretation in its original form, and even less likely that we shall be able to effect an eclectic synthesis of different views. But, for reasons which I shall give later, I believe that there is hope of advance by a process of appreciating and differing from the chief theological leaders of the age which now lies behind us.

There must always be something arbitrary in the choice of a *terminus a quo* for a historical survey such as I have in mind. Fresh movements of thought, changes in method, modifications of sentiment, can seldom or never be exactly dated. There is always a preparation for a new step. For any innovator we can always find precursors. In retrospect a revolution is apt to appear less of a revolution than it seemed to be to its leaders at the time. Moreover, it is an ineluctable law of human life that change follows change, and, since men cannot for the most part carry a multiplicity of problems in their heads at the same time, when a generation is called upon to

meet some new situation, almost of necessity it loses its sense for the issues of an earlier crisis. On a backward glance it is more impressed by the continuity of past history than by the revolutions which have marked its progress. It is apt to think that essential change has been reserved for the crisis which impends.

In much recent writing on religion as on other aspects of life there is a perceptible tendency to depreciate the extent and the importance of the change which passed over the world of thought about the beginning of the last century. To those who took part in that flowering of speculative thought, of poetry, of historical enquiry, which we know as the Romantic Movement, it seemed that the old had passed away and that all things had become new. By intuition and imagination the spirit of man was once more in contact with the informing spirit of the universe. The cold formalism of the preceding age thawed and dissolved before the genial warmth. The forces of life in all their infinite variety were revealed once more. Withal a new outlook on religion gained ground. The Christian religion, the ancient historic faith, was re-discovered and reinstated. Natural religion, with other formalisms, was dethroned, and scope was to be allowed for the positive faith of the Church of Christ to regenerate the life of men and nations. Such was the promise of the movement in the eyes of many who lived in the first decades of the last century. It is inevitable that the movement should present itself to our generation in a very different light. We are widely removed not only in time but also in temper from those days. The ideas no longer awaken a spontaneous response. The Romantic Move-

ment has taken its place in history and we now ask with a certain air of detachment what it actually achieved, and how much that is really new may be ascribed to its influence. We are more conscious than were contemporaries of continuity between the categories of eighteenth-century thought and the philosophies of Schleiermacher and of Hegel. "The customary view", writes Ernst Cassirer, "that the eighteenth century was a specifically 'unhistorical' century is a conception which has not itself been historically grounded nor can it be: it is rather a battle-cry and a watch-word minted by Romanticism to enable it to take the field against the philosophy of Illumination. But if we look more closely into the course of this campaign we find that it is the Illumination itself which forged the weapons which were used to conduct it. The historical culture which was called up on the side of Romanticism against the Illumination, and in the name of which the intellectual presuppositions of the Illumination were contested, was first discovered in virtue of these presuppositions, in virtue of the ideas and ideals of the Illumination. If Romanticism had not had the help of the Philosophy of the Illumination, and if it had not taken possession of its spiritual legacy, it could never have attained or kept its own position. It differed widely from the Illumination in the content of its conception of history, and in the matter of its 'philosophy of history', but none the less in method it remained continuously bound to the Illumination and under the deepest of obligations to it. For it is the eighteenth century which in the sphere of history, as elsewhere, set the fundamental philosophical problem. It raised the question as to the conditions of the possibility

of history, as it raised the question concerning the conditions of knowing nature."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps we may say that the Romantic Movement represents a re-ordering of the eighteenth-century inheritance under the influence of an idealistic philosophy of organism: and if we do not demur in principle to a generalisation of this kind, should we not regard Romanticism as the last phase of the Illumination rather than as the beginning of the epoch in which we live?

In the emergence of such questions and in the new perspective to which they point we see symptoms of a profound change which is taking place within ourselves. For in the main it is true that so far as the nineteenth century was in possession of distinctive and constructive ideas in philosophy and in theology, it derived them from the great idealistic systems of Kant and his successors. In the early decades of the nineteenth century philosophical speculation assumed control for the last time of the intellectual and spiritual life of the age. In Germany at any rate the special sciences were inspired, co-ordinated and directed by a philosophical world view. The movement reached its climax with Hegel, and for some time after his death Hegelian Idealism continued to be the chief force in the academic teaching and the public life of Germany. About the middle of the century the reign of Hegel ended, and the sciences, natural and historical, asserted their autonomy. Philosophy and theology were compelled by the forces of the age to accept as it were a departmental status. Yet this revolution, profound and far reaching as it has been in its effects, did not end the influence of the classical philosophy of Germany and of the theology

<sup>1</sup> E. Cassirer, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (1932), pp. 263 f.



which had been so closely associated with that philosophy. For both philosophy and theology recovered their balance and discovered fresh lines of active development by a return to the fountain head of modern philosophy, Immanuel Kant. Albeit working within a more restricted field, philosophers made fresh applications of other sides of Kant's teaching, epistemological, ethical and religious, maintaining a much needed criticism of the presuppositions of the Natural Sciences and attempting to synthesise the conclusions of the various autonomous sciences in a comprehensive idealistic view of the world. Until near the end of the century academic philosophy may be said to have continued for the most part to work on the lines laid down by Kant.

In our own country thought does not move, so to speak, collectively, as it appears to us to do in Germany. I suppose that with us systematic philosophy is much less influential, and it is also more individual. It is not easy to generalise about English thought in our period. The Utilitarian philosophy of the later eighteenth century lived long and productively into the nineteenth. It is enough to recall here the name of John Stuart Mill, who, though his mind was touched by other influences, remained fundamentally Utilitarian to the last. Here in Cambridge we still revere the name of Henry Sidgwick, a characteristically English mind, untainted by German transcendentalism. Yet when all necessary reservations have been made, it will scarcely be disputed that from the time of Coleridge onwards, Idealism, Kantian or Hegelian, has been a pervasive factor, and often a dominant factor, in British philosophical thought and, what is especially

## 6 THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

important for us, it was the idealistic tendency which decisively influenced theology. First we may name Coleridge, later Frederick Denison Maurice who with many another had drunk deep of Coleridge's spirit. From a widely different standpoint Mansel attempted to apply the agnostic side of Kant's teaching to the defence of a threatened orthodoxy. Later again the fresh development of Hegelianism on British soil, after it had been discredited in the home of its birth, has been profoundly important for English theology in the later decades of the last century. It is important still.

But how very different is the position in which we find ourselves to-day from the position of a quarter of a century ago! In our own country Idealism still boasts illustrious representatives; it still wins fresh recruits. But whereas at the beginning of this century an Idealist epistemology was I suppose defended by a majority of philosophical teachers, by now the tide has for some time set in the direction of Realism. Some philosophers of note—especially in Cambridge—not only do not accept an Idealistic Metaphysic, but regard the whole attempt to frame a systematic theory of reality as a misunderstanding of the function of philosophy. Philosophy, as they conceive it, has the specific duty of investigating certain clearly defined and limited problems in logical analysis. At all costs it must maintain this, its critical character, and eschew the dangerous and elusive efforts of metaphysical construction. For philosophy as thus conceived religious issues can scarcely arise. Religion seems usually to be left with no clear status or recognition. This is indeed a remarkable contrast with the position of a few decades ago. The religious bearing of

the theistic philosophies of thinkers such as James Ward and W. R. Sorley was obvious, and though it may be fairly questioned how far the philosophies of Bradley and Bosanquet or their disciple Mr Oakeshott succeed in doing justice to the demands of the religious consciousness, no one can mistake their high valuation of the religious side of life and their determination to make room for it in their thought. It is indeed hard to resist the impression that, valuable as has been the strict method of the new school as a corrective, the conception of philosophy, as understood by some at any rate of its adherents, has been gravely impoverished. We may conclude these observations by noting the significant hesitation of Dr Ewing's conclusions in his recent thorough examination of the Idealist philosophy.<sup>1</sup> He considers that the critics of the Idealist epistemology have not been answered, and he is deeply conscious of the debt which philosophy owes to the penetration of these critics. But he thinks that the reaction has gone too far, and that there are still lessons which the critics might learn from the great Idealists. Thus there is hesitation in his own attitude. But there is no hesitation at all in his rejection of the view that philosophy consists solely in the analysis of the meaning of "common-sense" statements. Philosophy for Dr Ewing is philosophy in the classical meaning of the word; he does not encourage us to expect a revival of Idealist epistemology, but he looks for a new synthesis which will take up the critical work of the logical analysts, and, when the tide turns as it inevitably will, make use of it in a fresh approach to the tasks of constructive thought.

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Ewing, *Idealism: a critical survey* (1934), Introduction.

In Germany too there has been a breach with the Idealistic trend of nineteenth-century philosophy. The influential "phenomenological" doctrine of Husserl, with its fundamental distinction between 'fact' and 'essence', initiated a new method of philosophical analysis which was in conscious opposition to the older psychological logic, and leaned towards a quasi-Platonic Realism. And this revolution has been followed by vigorous attempts to grapple with the larger tasks of philosophy which in the later nineteenth century had fallen into the background. "There is a tendency", we are told, "to attack philosophical problems in a new way, namely by abandoning the epistemological approach and starting from a fundamental phenomenon—either 'Life' or 'Existenz'—which is perhaps deeper, certainly more realistic, although more impervious to analysis."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the knowing mind is no longer in the centre of the picture; rather man finding himself in a concrete situation, judging it by a standard of absolute values, and responding to its demands for choice. This is a movement of criticism and revolt, but it is very different in its character from the criticism with which we are familiar in England. A new role is cast for philosophy in a scientific age. There is no suggestion that thought can revert to the earlier stage when the separate sciences were still in more or less conscious dependence upon philosophy, but philosophers must not be content to acquiesce in the autonomy of the sciences and to regard their own function as that of maintaining an epistemological criticism of the special sciences from without. The

<sup>1</sup> W. Brock, *Contemporary German Philosophy*, p. 45.

newer philosophy finds its own problems emergent within the sciences themselves. Thus instead of being a mere development of the later nineteenth-century philosophy, these new movements rather wear the appearance of a fresh start; they draw inspiration not only, perhaps not chiefly, from the great leaders of the nineteenth century, but also from the great rebels of the last age, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Kierkegaard's fierce onslaught upon the Hegelian doctrine that the antitheses of human experience are all capable of resolution by the immanent absolute spirit, falls in with the temper of an age which finds the time so seriously out of joint that it no longer looks for salvation within itself. The world as known to us remains a broken unintelligible fragment which to the end leaves man questioning and unsatisfied. From Nietzsche German thought has imbibed a new and a higher conception of the philosopher's calling—not the mere criticism of naturalism, nor the scholarly exploration of the history of thought, but an individual quest for the absolute values which afford a standard of criticism for all life. I suppose that in Germany the breach with the philosophical tradition of the late nineteenth century has been more emphatic than with us. But both here and there the signs of the times seem to indicate that we are moving to some new treatment of the ever-insistent problems which the development of the special sciences, above all else, has created for us.

Such a change as this which we have observed cannot but have a meaning for theology. Though philosophy is not theology, and though theology can never wisely identify itself in any exclusive sense with any one philosophy,

it is in the very nature of things that each should react upon the other. There is no question as to the close connexions and interactions which have existed in past history between philosophy and theology, and we may anticipate that such interaction—perhaps in the future as in the past not without friction—will recur. There is indeed one view of philosophy which, in its extreme form at any rate, would seem entirely to snap the link between itself and theology. I mean the view to which I have already referred that philosophy is to be limited to the analysis of the deliverances of common-sense. But

If indeed there be  
 An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom  
 Our dark foundations rest, could he design  
 That this magnificent effect of power,  
 The earth we tread, the sky that we behold  
 By day, and all the pomp which night reveals;  
 That these—and that superior mystery  
 Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,  
 And the dread soul within it—should exist  
 Only to be examined, pondered, searched,  
 Probed, vexed and criticised?<sup>1</sup>

The poet here may speak for the theologian, but, if I mistake not, he speaks for some philosophers as well.

When now we turn to some of the more recent developments in theology we find what we should expect to find—a change of interest and emphasis related to, and in part created by, that change in the position of philosophy which I have tried briefly to sketch. The most vigorous theological movement of these post-war years has been in conscious reaction against the dominant tendencies of the nineteenth century. If theology from Schleiermacher to

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, Book iv.

Harnack has found its basis and its *data* in history, the new theology repudiates from the outset the possibility of founding theology upon historical experience. If the nineteenth-century theology found its peculiar province in the devout consciousness of the believer, the new school will know of no human consciousness in the sphere of religion, save the consciousness of sin and guilt. If there was one point on which more than another the Liberal protagonists of the last century were clear, it was that the ecclesiastical dogma had been superseded for all who were not tied fast by the bands of tradition. But for the new school it is precisely in dogma and in dogma alone that the creative Word of the transcendent God finds its necessary protection against the impertinent scrutiny of mere human reason. The new theologians seem to themselves to join hands across two centuries with the broken tradition of the Christian Confessions. The real breach in Christian history as they see it came with the eighteenth century. The supposed recovery of Christian faith in the nineteenth century was illusion. From the end of the Confessional period until now the epoch stands as a unity under the sign of the Illumination. And for those who have eyes to see, the epoch is closed: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God"—the authentic Christian religion long distorted and forgotten—"is", now once more, "at hand."

It is a question of general interest how this widespread break away from the theological development of the last century has come about. The leaders of this school were themselves trained and nourished by representatives of the Liberal tradition. What has been the internal explanation of this failure to retain the support of many of

the younger men? And in what direction is the new movement actually tending?

The new movement has a double aspect—one negative, and one positive. Negatively it is characterised by a strong repudiation of theological Liberalism. Positively it claims to reassert the authentic Christian Revelation which Liberalism had allowed itself to lose. If we would interpret the “sign” of Karl Barth we must seek to do justice to both these aspects of the movement. It thus becomes necessary to enquire when and how this remarkable loss, for which Liberalism is held responsible, came about. And it is also necessary to ask whether the Revelation which the Barthian theologians are recovering is the same as the Revelation which the Liberals lost.

The concept of Revelation has been in the forefront of theological discussion at any time since the beginning of the deistic controversy at the end of the seventeenth century. It might therefore seem necessary to start our enquiry at least as far back as that date. And certainly I should whole-heartedly agree that for anyone who wishes to come to grips with the problem of theology in the modern world, a general acquaintance with the developments of the eighteenth century is an essential requisite. But there is a very important difference between the controversies of the eighteenth and those of the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century the idea of Revelation was attacked, it was not lost. The controversies were of great importance and their implications were far reaching, but they scarcely touched the inner constitution of such Christian theology as still lived on. If the question before us is, When did the Liberals lose the idea of Revelation?



we can give a fairly precise answer, viz. the beginning of the nineteenth, and not the beginning of the eighteenth, century. That was the crucial turning point in the history of the idea of Revelation and thus I am provided with an ample justification for the starting point which I have chosen for these lectures on the doctrine of the Person of Christ. In any system of Christian doctrine Jesus Christ is the central point of Revelation, however Revelation may be conceived, and the vicissitudes of the idea of Revelation are bound to be related to the vicissitudes of Christological doctrine.

In order to bring out the nature of the change which came about at the beginning of the nineteenth century, I will choose a text from the history of Cambridge theology in the later eighteenth century. The choice admits of a more serious defence than local interest; for in the later eighteenth century the University of Cambridge could boast of a little group of theologians who carried perhaps more weight with average educated opinion concerning religion in the country than any other few men of that time who might be named. These men were Whigs, they were rationalists, they were believers—Latitudinarian believers certainly, but believers. This combination did not please all men, and in particular it displeased important sections of clerical opinion. But it united three strong currents of eighteenth-century thought and exercised a pervasive influence upon the country. The *doyen* of the group was Edmund Law (b. 1703), Master of Peterhouse (1754–87), sometime Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy (1764–69) and Bishop of Carlisle (1769–87). Law was a learned rather than an

original divine. Among the more notable of his literary achievements was an edition of the collected works of John Locke, whose disciple in philosophy he professed himself. In theology too Law was a Liberal of the type of John Locke: he sat loose to the scholastic definitions of the traditional theology—of which however he had a considerable knowledge; and in general he sympathised with the movement for the relaxation of the terms of subscription to the Articles of Religion. He had also something of his own to say. The idea of progress or development in religion finds some place in his thought, and he anticipated in a tentative fashion Lessing's thesis that Revelation is analogous to Education. If Edmund Law was the leader and chief patron of this Cambridge school, its best-known representative was a younger man of the next generation—William Paley, Archdeacon of Carlisle and Bishop Law's *protégé*. As the eighteenth century moved to its close Paley became, what for some time he was to remain, the most influential theological writer in the kingdom. Another kindred spirit was John Hey, our first Norrisian Professor (1780–95), who delivered admirable lectures—Latitudinarian in tendency—on the Thirty-Nine Articles.

In the year 1771 there was a vacancy in the Regius Professorship of Divinity occasioned by the death of the learned and orthodox Dr Rutherford of St John's. The choice of the electors fell upon the Rev. Richard Watson of Trinity, one of the younger men who maintained the opinions of the school of Bishop Law. He had held the Professorship of Chemistry since 1764, and was afterwards to become the famous absentee Bishop of Llandaff.

The Professor has left on record the method by which he set himself to carry out the duties of his new office:

“On being raised to this distinguished office”, he wrote, “I immediately applied myself with great eagerness to the study of divinity. Eagerness, indeed, in the pursuit of knowledge was a part of my temper, till the acquisition of knowledge was attended with nothing but the neglect of the King and his ministers; and I feel by a broken constitution at this hour, the effects of that literary diligence with which I laboured for a great many years.

“I reduced the study of divinity into as narrow a compass as I could, for I determined to study nothing but my Bible, being much unconcerned about the opinions of councils, fathers, churches, bishops, and other men, as little inspired as myself. This mode of proceeding being opposite to the general one, and especially to that of the Master of Peterhouse, who was a great reader, he used to call me *αὐτοδιδάκτος*, the self-taught divine.—The Professor of Divinity had been nick-named *Malleus Haereticorum*; it was thought to be his duty to demolish every opinion which militated against what is called the orthodoxy of the Church of England. Now my mind was wholly unbiassed; I had no prejudice against, no predilection for the Church of England; but a sincere regard for the *Church of Christ*, and an insuperable objection to every degree of dogmatical intolerance. I never troubled myself with answering any arguments which the opponents in the divinity schools brought against the articles of the church, nor ever admitted their authority as decisive of a difficulty; but I used on such occasions to say to them, holding the New Testament in my hand, *En sacrum*

*codicem!* Here is the fountain of truth, why do you follow the streams derived from it by the sophistry, or polluted by the passions of man? If you can bring proofs against anything delivered in this book, I shall think it my duty to reply to you; articles of churches are not of divine authority; have done with them; for they may be true, they may be false; and appeal to the book itself. This mode of disputing gained me no credit with the hierarchy, but I thought it an honest one, and it produced a liberal spirit in the University."<sup>1</sup>

We observe that Watson has lost contact with the tradition of theology. Bishop Law had combined his rational supernatural belief with a wide theological culture. He knew what he was discarding and why. The same may be said of John Hey. Watson assumes the hard won gains of his predecessors and jauntily throws to the winds a system he has never properly understood. Christianity is to be made palatable by drastic reduction, and it is the theologian's function to effect this reduction. For our present purpose the important point to notice is that though Professor Watson is completely emancipated from the technicalities of Patristic theology, though Creeds and Councils matter nothing to him, his hold upon the idea of Revelation is unimpaired. He grips as firmly, as confidently as St Thomas or John Calvin. *En sacrum codicem!* Above the flux of human error, the holy Book holds its firm place. To that—though to nothing else—the believer is pledged. Revelation, as Watson accepts it,

<sup>1</sup> *Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff*, written by himself at different intervals and revised in 1814 (London, 1817), pp. 38, 39.

is clear, definite, concrete. Of course he knows that there are those—Gibbon for instance—who do not believe in Revelation. When he meets such men he is prepared to defend the faith. Revelation is still a term with a clear meaning. Both those who accept and those who reject know what they mean and they mean more or less the same thing. The change came as the career of Richard Watson was nearing its end—let us say with S. T. Coleridge—at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Of course the word Revelation was still used. Of course the old idea as well as the old word was vigorously defended. But an increasing number of the people who count began to use the word—as a modern Roman Catholic divine, Tanqueray, has forcibly, but not unfairly, put it—*cum sensu prorsus alieno*,<sup>1</sup> “in an entirely different sense”. The beginning of the nineteenth century is thus a watershed—on the one side is Professor Richard Watson, supported, little as it would have gratified him to know it, by the universal tradition of historic Christendom: on the other Coleridge, Schleiermacher, Harnack, you and I; and to this latter company for this purpose we may add the names of Dr Brunner and Dr Barth.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Bible was for the first time drawn within the whole story of man's history, which hitherto it had been supposed to

<sup>1</sup> A. Tanqueray, *Brevior Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae*, 3rd ed. p. 18: “Hunc apparet Revelationem supernaturalem esse donum omnino gratuitum quod, sive ex se, sive ex parte modi, transcendit exigentias et vires humanas naturae humanae. Accurate servanda est haec notio Revelationis, ut detegantur errores Protestantium Liberalium et Modernistarum qui vocem retinent sed cum sensu prorsus alieno”.

encircle. The idea of Revelation was thrown into the melting pot. And therewith it was inevitable that the interpretation of him who is the centre of Revelation, Jesus Christ, should enter upon a new stage. The implications of what then happened have not yet been fully worked out. We at least start to-day from presuppositions which the early nineteenth century in principle bequeathed to us. We may differ from the great writers of that period. We may be convinced that their central ideas must be surrendered. But we can differ from them profitably because there is enough in common between us and them to make interchange and comparison of ideas possible. The eighteenth century is scarcely less interesting, it may be argued that it is even more important, but if we are trying to hammer things out for ourselves the writers of the last century can help us and provoke us as those of the eighteenth cannot. And therefore I start with the movement which ushered in the nineteenth century: Romanticism.

## II

### THE CHRISTOLOGY OF ROMANTICISM

It is inevitable that the treatment of this subject should revolve around the name of Friedrich Schleiermacher. It is not that the Romantic Movement was a peculiarly German phenomenon nor was it in Germany only that it awakened religion to fresh life. In our own country it struck roots as deep as in any country on the continent of Europe, and here, as elsewhere, it changed the tone and temper of religious faith and sentiment. But its supreme expressions in our literature and thought were poetic rather than philosophical or directly theological. Coleridge indeed gave a powerful impulse to theology, and, in a less direct way, prepared the way for later developments in speculation. But though, as Professor Muirhead has recently maintained,<sup>1</sup> Coleridge was a serious and coherent thinker, the aphoristic form of his writing and the looseness of his terminology forbid us to place him in the highest rank among philosophers. For an enduring and satisfying expression in our literature of the deeper spirit of Romanticism on its religious side we may turn to the poem from which I have already quoted and to which I shall return, the fourth book of *The Excursion*.

In Germany, the same, or similar, impulses gave rise to a systematic theology which has exercised a lasting influence on the thought of the Protestant churches both of Germany and of other lands, and has even, though within

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Muirhead, *Coleridge as Philosopher* (1930).

a rather restricted circle, affected the thought of certain Roman Catholic schools in the home of its birth.

It must be allowed that from about the middle of the eighteenth century Germany began to assume the leadership of theological thought which in the earlier decades of the century had belonged to England. While our most active Cambridge divines were proving the existence of the Divine Workman from the mechanisms of Nature and plying that evidential theology which was the natural sequel of Locke's teaching on Revelation, Germany had learned from Semler the important truth that the sacred canon itself had had a history, and Lessing was discovering and publishing a fruitful application of literary criticism to the Gospel texts. It was the same age in which the *Critique of Pure Reason* rescued philosophy from the impasse to which Hume had brought it and prepared the way for a deeper philosophy of faith. There was no counterpart in England to these activities of German thought in the later decades of the eighteenth century and there was no English counterpart to Schleiermacher at the opening of the nineteenth century.

Schleiermacher's doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ is conditioned at every point by his reaction against the dominant idea of natural religion. In the youthful *Reden über die Religion*<sup>1</sup> he sketches the contemporary attitude

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (Berlin 1799). Later editions annotated and revised were published by Schleiermacher himself in 1806, 1821 and 1831. The book was reproduced in its original form by Rudolf Otto in 1899 in commemoration of the centenary of its first appearance (3rd ed. Göttingen 1913). English trans. by J. Oman (*On Religion: Speeches to its cultured despisers*, 1893).



towards religion: for the most part he declares that it is despised; particular religions with their dogmas and their institutions are barely tolerated, and tolerated only on condition that they are muzzled; their exclusive claims are offensive to the reason; religion can only be thought entitled to the respect of educated men in so far as it is capable of statement in terms of universal and eternal truths of natural religion. There had been a time—after the exhaustion of the religious wars of the seventeenth century—when such ideas had come as a blessed, even a prophetic, release from dogmatic discord, but by the year 1799 the forces which had sustained them were ceasing to operate. Release of another sort was now demanded by the age, and this Schleiermacher knew how to bring. Like Kant, Schleiermacher had experienced in childhood and youth the warm devotion of Pietism. There was religion indeed: not the cold conclusion of the intellect, not the oppressive demands of a moral code, but the living power of God within the soul.

But Pietism as Schleiermacher had known it among the Moravian Brethren at Herrnhut was confined within the narrow tenets of the Conventicle. Its mental furniture—Biblical literalism and a crude substitutionary doctrine of the Atonement—was unable to meet the test of contact with the outer world. As a student at the Moravian Seminary at Barby, Schleiermacher had already won his own release and learned that this must be jettisoned. Religion must learn to give the discursive reason its due rights. It must allow, under Kant's guidance, for the freedom and autonomy of the moral consciousness. Not less necessary was it that the discursive reason and the moral

consciousness should themselves learn to allow to religion its own inalienable and high prerogative, for religion has its roots in the depths of human personality, deeper than reason, deeper than will, for reason and will are, as it were, later differentiations of the primordial unity of the self. Religion lies in the relation of the individual to the Infinite. It is not thought, not action, but feeling—the intuition of the universe.

Such is the general concept of religion which Schleiermacher develops in the second of the *Reden*, but it is the fifth and last of the *Reden*, entitled “Concerning the Religions”, which chiefly claims our attention now. Here again we find the polemic against the eighteenth-century attitude: not only is the prevailing concept of natural religion mistaken, inasmuch as it assumes that religion is primarily a matter of the intellect, it is also mistaken in supposing that religion is, or should be, everywhere one and the same. The contrary, Schleiermacher argues, is the truth. Religion lives and may be observed only in special or “positive” forms. The essence of religion must individualise itself. Thus the great historical religions are not to be regarded as declensions from, or regrettable additions to, the simple general truths of a supposed religion of Nature, but the necessary and varied individual manifestations of a fundamental relationship between the finite and the Infinite. The essential nature of a religion is not to be found in a catalogue of specific differences of creed or practice, but in the dominant relation to the Infinite which, under the influence of its Founder, has been singled out as the determinant which gives character to the whole. Schleiermacher applies his heuristic

method, which is of course meant to have universal relevance, to the two historical religions of Judaism and Christianity. Judaism, he maintains, is a dead faith; a lifeless mummy. Its interest lies not in its historical connexion with Christianity—"I hate", says Schleiermacher, "that kind of historical reference"—but rather in that it enshrines a beautiful childlike faith which, though it is now dead, once lived. The dominant relation which determined its character was that man stood related to God under a law of reward and retribution: God punishes, God blesses, in response to the obedience or disobedience of men. Christianity he finds to rest on a deeper and more universal relation: in Christianity we find the Infinite God reconciling to Himself the struggling and recalcitrant world of finite experiences. The finite ever tends to break away, to lose relation with the Infinite Whole through the self-assertion of the sensebound finite consciousness. This tendency evokes the principle of Christianity, which makes of it a religion with a character of its own—redemption of this fallen world of the finite into unity with the Infinite Whole. Of this principle Jesus Christ is the supreme Exemplar. Christ is to be pronounced Divine in virtue of "the glorious clearness to which the great idea he came to exhibit attained in his soul". The origins of this consciousness must be left in mystery, but in his Person the union of God and man is accomplished, and he is the mediator to others of what was realised in himself. Yet in principle he does not stand alone. He never claimed, says the Schleiermacher of the *Reden*, to be the sole mediator. There are other mediators whose function is not essentially different from his. Nay, the activity of a mediator,

though historically and practically all-important, is not a strict necessity. The mediator is less than the principle he mediates. Nor is it necessary for Christianity to claim to be, or to expect to become, the universal faith. Rather it will welcome other complementary religions alongside of itself which express other relations of man with the Infinite. Again, by its own confession, Christianity is not eternal, for when the process of redemption is complete the religion which is controlled by the process of redemption must cease to be. "I would gladly stand on the ruins of the religion I honour." But so long as the counterstriving of the finite still endures—and can we expect it to cease so long as time exists?—the mission of Christianity cannot be exhausted.

Now in all this there is very little that can be called doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is easy to see how plausible, nay, how true, is the contention that Schleiermacher's doctrinal position here is a modification of the rationalistic minimising interpretation of Christ as the Great Teacher rather than a fresh start. He himself came to feel the inadequacy of his position as stated in the *Reden* in their first form, and he advanced to a really fresh position which will engage our attention directly. But first we must observe the all-important character of the positions which Schleiermacher has already secured. He had vindicated the historical positive religions against the presumption that they were, in principle, insignificant. Secondly, he had opened up a method of approach to historical positive religion without presupposing the conception of infallible revelation. The "ugly ditch" which even Lessing, in some respects a forerunner of the

higher valuation of history, still found between the "accidental truths of history" and "the necessary truths of reason" was bridged. Or rather, it would be truer to say that Schleiermacher started a landslide which obliterated not the ditch only, but both its banks as well. For, on the one hand, Schleiermacher's "universe" is concrete reality rather than a "necessary truth", and on the other "the accidental truths of history", miracle and prophecy, which Lessing found himself invited to accept as testimony to a historical revelation are now quietly dropped, to be replaced by experienced contacts on the plane of history between man and his spiritual environment.

There are weaknesses, grave weaknesses, in Schleiermacher's interpretation of religion. The fear of surrender to the austere moralism of Kant is responsible for a very inadequate treatment of the relation between religion and ethics. As Dilthey well puts it: "The individual character of Schleiermacher's religious attitude certainly helped him to explain the positive historical character of all higher religion; it afforded a starting point from which he could outline a deeper conception of Christianity, and an explanation of the need for fellowship. But Schleiermacher's type of piety removes from religion all will to grasp the essence of God in a relation of obedient direct knowledge. It fails to provide an explanation of the objective certainty which we find in the ethical religions that they have understood the Will of God and therefrom received an impulse to subdue the world to this divine Will. There is something in the Founder of a world-religion which the insight of Schleiermacher's personal mysticism and the piety of congenial spirits have not enabled him

to discover."<sup>1</sup> This is admirable criticism, but it must not hinder our recognition of the service which Schleiermacher rendered to the theory and practice of religion. The answer to those to-day who profess to see in him the Great Deceiver is written in the history of the century which preceded and the century which has followed his life. If theologians to-day are really prepared to defend revelation, as revelation was known to classical Christian orthodoxy, they are entitled, with Karl Barth, to damn the development of theology in the eighteenth century as a pathological aberration and to dismiss Schleiermacher as a case of "Satan driving out Satan". Not otherwise. If the evolution of theology in which the best minds of two centuries have participated is to be allowed to have happened not without Divine guidance, the place of Schleiermacher is secure.

For Schleiermacher's mature treatment of the doctrine of Christ's Person we must turn to his systematic work on Christian doctrine<sup>2</sup> written more than twenty years after the youthful *Reden*. The general approach of the *Reden* is still maintained, but there is noteworthy difference in aim, in subject, and in temper. In the *Reden* Schleiermacher flings down a challenge to the accepted views of his contemporaries. His subject is religion in general. The interval had witnessed the rebirth of Germany after the humiliation of the Napoleonic era and the reconstruction

<sup>1</sup> W. Dilthey, *Leben Schleiermachers*, I (2nd ed. by H. Mulert, Berlin and Leipzig, 1922) p. 460.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt* (1821, 2nd ed. 1830-1). English trans., *The Christian Faith* (from the 2nd ed.), ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, 1928.

of her political, intellectual and spiritual life. Schleiermacher had played a patriot's part in that stirring age and had learned the necessity of relating religion and theological conviction to the ordered life of the Church. His work this time is definitely dogmatic: he works out a Christian theology from within. Assuming the existence of the Christian faith and the Christian Church as positive data, he sets himself to examine the theological implications which that faith and that Church involve. It will be seen that his conception of the theologian's province is still conditioned by principles already stated in the *Reden*. Writing as a Christian he looks to Christ, the historical Founder, and thus necessarily appeals to the New Testament writings which tell of him. At the same time he does not attempt to deduce formal conclusions of a doctrinal character from the texts of Scripture. His system is not to be a collection of *credenda* but an interpretation of an actual faith controlled by a dominant idea; or rather, as we should say of the *Glaubenslehre*, controlled by a dominant Person. For Schleiermacher now recognises that in Christianity the relation of the Founder to the members of the Communion is quite different from what it is in the other religions. Thus in Judaism and in Islam "even an adherent of these faiths will hardly deny that God could just as well have given the Law through another, as through Moses, and the Revealed Book could just as well have been received through another, as through Mohammed" (§ 11. 4). For Christianity Schleiermacher now gives us the definition: "Christianity is a monotheistic faith, belonging to the teleological type of religion, and is essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact

that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth." It is the deliverance of the Christian consciousness that through fellowship with and incorporation in the redemptive activity of Christ the believer becomes participator in the blessedness and perfection of God. If this is so, and the testimony of history tells us that it is, the question next presents itself, Who then is he who can be active in this way and to this end? The doctrines of Christ's Person and Christ's Work are two aspects of one question.

Jesus Christ was the complete embodiment of the blessedness which he imparts derivatively to others. In him the union of God and man was actualised, so that we may say of him what we say of no other, that God actually existed in him and made him the Person he was. He knew no sin. Nay, he did not really suffer temptation, for, be the struggle never so little, where there is struggle there there is taint of sin. In Christ the God-consciousness was uninterrupted and complete; the finite was assumed by the Infinite. This is not to be thought of as an achievement of the man, still less as the reward bestowed upon him, rather we must see in his sinless Person the direct activity of God.

Two Gospels tell us that he was born of his mother, Mary, without the activity of a human father. It may have been so. But the instructed reader of the New Testament is bidden to observe how restricted is the evidence for this belief and how slight the part it plays in the general doctrine of the New Testament. Nor will Schleiermacher allow weight to the contention of later theology that such a birth was necessary to break the



entail of sin. For if there were human parentage at all the birth took place in the realm of sin. We do not avoid the difficulty by believing that there was no human father unless we also postulate an immaculate mother; but then the problem is only thrown back, and we are involved in postulating, without a suspicion of support from evidence, an infinite series of sinless persons. The alleged miracle of the birth is therefore not necessary; but yet the coming of the Person was itself a miracle in that the Divine here wholly and completely assumed the human. Jesus Christ is to be thought of as the completion of the creation of man; he is at once a supernatural Person and a natural Person: supernatural because the God-consciousness wholly controlled and filled his life; natural because he was a real man who lived a fully human life on this our common earth.

Schleiermacher discusses at some length his attitude to the technical theology of the Councils. Broadly speaking, he accepts the criticism of the age of the Illumination and presses home previous objections with fresh objections of his own. The orthodox doctrine of Christ as one Person in two natures is expressed in concepts which, he maintains, have become misleading and unintelligible. The term "nature" applied to the Divine is in place in a polytheistic religion, but not in a monotheistic faith, and he points out the discrepancy of the doctrine of the Incarnate Person with the doctrine of the Trinity in this respect. How does the Divine nature in which the God-man shared stand related to the doctrine of the Trinity which is stated in terms of substance and person? Has each "Person" of the Trinity a Divine nature of His own? The supposition

involves grave difficulties, yet if the Divine nature is proper to the triune Godhead, what then is its relation to the οὐσία or substance? He finds a parallel discrepancy in the concept of hypostasis which tends to carry different meanings according as the doctrine of the Godhead or the doctrine of the Incarnate Christ is in question. Yet Schleiermacher is anxious to show that though his own doctrine is stated in different terms, he is concerned to deny what the definitions sought to deny. The orthodox formula of the hypostatic union rightly precludes a doctrine which fails to establish a real union between God and man; and the doctrine of the two natures guards against the notion that either Godhead or manhood could lose its integrity through the Incarnation. But in Schleiermacher's view these ancient definitions have little direct value for the Church to-day. They belong to the history of doctrine rather than to the doctrine of the evangelical Church.

Schleiermacher was the first great Protestant theologian since the classical age of the Reformation to lay a primary doctrinal emphasis upon the idea of the Church. It is through the fellowship of Christ's Church that the individual is brought into living relationship with Jesus Christ. It was a corollary from this that Schleiermacher recognised the necessity of allowing for considerable difference in doctrinal statement and devotional attitude within the one fellowship. He regards his own doctrine of Christ as the true mean between two extremes—extremes which need not and should not be excluded, but yet may be recognised as inadequate. On the one hand he sees what he calls the "empirical" attitude which is content to

interpret Christ as the Great Teacher: this was the dominant note in the rationalistic versions of Christianity. On the other hand is the "magical" view of a direct personal relation between the living Christ and the believing soul. In this latter extreme we recognise the mystical tendencies of some forms of Pietism. Both these extremes agree in this, that either doctrine could be held without belief in the Incarnation. For if Christ as a living Person can speak direct to the soul or mind, what necessity remains for the revelation of that Person in an historical human form? Why should not the whole process of redemption be carried out without introducing the principle of historical mediation? If on the other hand Christ is for us merely Teacher, we do indeed pay honour to the historical figure, but we are in danger of losing the supreme principle of the Christian faith—mediation between God and finite man. Schleiermacher is content to rest all on what he takes to be the historical personality of the Redeemer whose action reaches us through the fellowship of believers incorporated into the redemption which he brought. This fellowship is truly and justly spoken of as "the body of Christ", and its life depends upon the original and originating Incarnation and nothing beyond. Scripture tells us that the body of Jesus was raised from the tomb and that he ascended visibly into heaven. Whatever may be the conclusions we adopt with regard to these narratives, they have no claim, so Schleiermacher argues, to doctrinal significance. Doctrinal significance is confined to that article in the Creed which speaks of Christ's session at God's right hand. This, he says, embodies in a pictorial form "the peculiar and incomparable dignity of Christ raised above all conflict".

The resurrection and ascension are merely steps, not in themselves essential, to that glorification. "The disciples", he writes, "recognised in Him the Son of God without having the faintest premonition of his resurrection and ascension, and we, too, may say the same of ourselves."

This brings us to a difficulty which we to-day cannot fail to feel when we try to understand Schleiermacher's teaching. There can be no doubt that Schleiermacher simplified too much. It must be remembered that when he wrote, just over a century ago, New Testament criticism was still in its tentative stages, and conclusions which for most of our generation are assumed, were then no more than conjectures—if indeed they had even been conjectured. Schleiermacher had no doubt that the attitude of the disciples during the earthly life was in its fulness as he describes it, because for him St John's Gospel—the work of a personal disciple of Jesus (on this he allows no doubts)—was the supreme historical document. The Synoptists he regards as subsidiary and less authoritative. Starting with this assumption he is able quite naturally to trace the highest flights of Christological doctrine solely to the direct personal impression of Our Lord's ministry on earth. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Schleiermacher is controlled by the Johannine conception of the Incarnation: the Word in flesh reveals on earth the full glory of his Person and his relation as Son to the Father. The mystical doctrine of St John's Gospel, the inner relationship of Father and Son and the mediation of a like relationship to those who shall believe

through him—"That they may be one as we also are one"—all this is to be taken as the actual content of the teaching, as well as the meaning of the Person, of the historical figure.

Schleiermacher, as we have already observed, refused to allow dogmatic significance to the resurrection of Jesus, and his suggestion is that the disciples had already attained the full measure of faith in him as Son of God prior to and apart from the resurrection. Nothing more clearly illustrates the deficiencies of Schleiermacher's handling of the New Testament, in respect both of doctrine and history, than his treatment of the resurrection. It might be argued that the doctrine of the Fourth Gospel is complete without the resurrection; that the work of revelation is completed when Christ is 'lifted up' upon the Cross, and that the doctrinal principle of the Gospel would be satisfied with an inward, invisible return. But in St Paul's Epistles the doctrinal and religious significance of the resurrection of Christ, "the first-fruits of them that sleep", is indeed hard to whittle away, and Schleiermacher seems to do scant justice to this aspect of St Paul's faith. But it would be a serious anachronism to suppose that Schleiermacher's attitude on this point is to be explained by any deliberate preference of the Johannine to the Pauline perspective. He does not with St John lay emphasis upon the crucifixion as the completion of the redeeming work. For him it is the supreme example of Christ's sympathy with human misery, not the efficient cause of man's redemption. Man's redemption is brought about by the incorporation of believers in the God-consciousness of Christ. In so far as it is connected with

any action of Christ, which may be separated even in thought from that incorporation, the peril of magical and unethical doctrine is present.

In dealing with the resurrection Schleiermacher is primarily concerned with the difficulty of a miraculous resuscitation from the grave. He discussed the matter in lectures on the life of Jesus (1832) which were published long afterwards from a student's notes.<sup>1</sup> In these lectures he himself prefers the least satisfactory of the rationalistic explanations. Certainty he considers to be unattainable, but he thinks it probable that Jesus fell into a death-like trance after which he was reanimated and restored to a normal life. The unimpeachable evidence of the Fourth Gospel requires us to believe, he says, that Jesus lived on in his real body. The apparently miraculous elements in the story are to be set down to the prepossessions of the disciples. He deals evasively with the pressing question as to how the renewed life ended. "Something happened", he says of the ascension, "but what was seen was incomplete and has been conjecturally supplemented." Nothing can show more clearly how necessary was that drastic purge which Strauss was shortly to administer.

Great as his services to the historical study of the Christian religion have been, they were indirect, not direct. He was no historian. He lacked feeling for the actual, and he had no sense of the movement and development of events. "In the course of his dialectic treatment",

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Das Leben Jesu* (ed. K. A. Rüttenik, 1864).

says Schweitzer in a scathing paragraph upon this work,<sup>1</sup> "all the historical questions involved in the life of Jesus come into view one after another, but none of them is based or solved from the point of view of the historian. They are 'moments' in his argument. He is like a spider at work. The spider lets itself down from the roof and after making fast some supporting threads to points below, it runs back to the centre and there keeps spinning away. You look on fascinated, and before you know it you are entangled in the web."

These strictures are written from the standpoint of a scholar familiar with the stricter conceptions of history which the nineteenth century was putting into currency. They touch Schleiermacher on his weakest side, for his historical exposition is hopelessly superseded. It is said that Schleiermacher was especially sensitive to the criticism that his Christ was an ideal and not a historical Christ. In the light of later research, research for which, be it said, Schleiermacher's own services did so much to prepare the way, the criticism must be endorsed. Christianity did not start as Schleiermacher thought it did.

From the outset he incapacitates himself for a proper valuation of the early Church by his prepossession that essential Christianity was equally independent of Judaism and of heathenism. This was a grave mistake. The filiation of Christianity to Judaism must be the historical starting-point. Christianity was a new religion certainly, but a religion which can only be grasped against the hopes, fears and beliefs of the Jewish people. "The Word became flesh" and God "taketh hold upon the seed of

<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 63.

Abraham" (Heb. ii. 16)—this necessary principle was unwelcome to Schleiermacher. Of course he recognised the connexion with Judaism—more adequately in the *Glaubenslehre* than in the *Reden*—but he shrinks from using it as a principle. Yet if Christianity is, as Schleiermacher has taught us, a positive faith, no truth about it is more sure than this.

Schleiermacher's greatness lies elsewhere. We shall be enabled the better to appreciate his real achievement by turning to a characteristic criticism which the *Glaubenslehre* has lately evoked from an unsympathetic antagonist. In his monograph on the Doctrine of Christ, *Der Mittler*,<sup>1</sup> Dr Brunner has argued that the *Glaubenslehre* is vitiated by a fundamental contradiction between the general conception of religion as feeling or intuition, and the assertion that the Christian religion is essentially knowledge concerning Jesus Christ and the redemption which he has brought. It is an offence to Dr Brunner that these two positions should be combined. He allows that the Romantic Movement took a fresh step in human thought when it reawakened consciousness of the positive value of the historical element, and so far he admits the value and the justification of Schleiermacher's treatment of religion. But he draws the line at Christianity. "It must be stated", he says, "quite emphatically that measured by the standard of the distinction between Religion in general and the Christian religion of Revelation, this [new step] has no significance whatever." For Brunner the Christian religion is Divine Revelation, sole, solitary and unique. There is no parallel to it anywhere else. To bring it under

<sup>1</sup> English trans. (by O. Wynn), *The Mediator* (1934), pp. 90 ff.



a common category with other religions is to contradict its essential nature. Thus when Schleiermacher first declares that religion in general—including the Christian religion—is feeling, and afterwards maintains that the Christian religion is dependent upon the knowledge of Jesus Christ, he is said to be guilty of making contradictory assertions. But the contradiction appears only to arise on Dr Brunner's presuppositions. These presuppositions are certainly asserted in *Der Mittler* with great emphasis, but I do not discover more than assertion. Schleiermacher's position is not inconsistent. Christianity for him is a positive religion with its own character: "a monotheistic faith, belonging to the teleological type of religion, essentially distinguished from other such faiths by the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth." You cannot have Christianity apart from knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is however also true that there are other religions alongside of Christianity which share with it in certain general characteristics. If this were not so, how come we to use the one generic term "religion" of them all? We cannot help ourselves. It is thus legitimate to recognise that religion is a universal element in human nature and to try to define its characteristics; nor is it inconsistent to maintain at the same time that there is no Christianity without Christ. We may question the adequacy of Schleiermacher's definition of religion, and we may urge that the knowledge of Christ carries implications to which Schleiermacher does less than justice. But there is no element of unworthy compromise in the contention that the sense of absolute dependence—the general characteristic of religion, ac-

cording to Schleiermacher—should receive a peculiar and supreme quality through the knowledge of the historical person Jesus Christ. Brunner is fearful for the doctrine of the sole sufficiency of the Mediator. He would feel with the Solitary of Wordsworth's *Excursion* when he recalled

those godly men  
Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,  
Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles  
That harboured them.

He would ask

How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme  
Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged  
Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh  
The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain  
Uprooted; would re-consecrate our wells  
To good Saint Fillan and to fair Saint Anne;  
And from long banishment recall Saint Giles?

We, in reply, may make our own the Wanderer's words:

You have turned my thoughts  
Upon our brave Progenitors, who rose  
Against idolatry with warlike mind,  
And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk  
In woods, and dwell under impending rocks  
Ill-sheltered, and oft wanting fire and food;  
Why?—for this very reason that they felt,  
And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,  
A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived,  
But still a high dependence, a divine  
Bounty and government, that filled their hearts  
With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love;  
And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise,  
That through the desert rang. Though favoured less,  
Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,  
Were those bewildered Pagans of old time.  
Beyond their own poor natures and above  
They looked; were humbly thankful for the good

Which the warm sun solicited, and earth  
 Bestowed; were gladsome,—and their moral sense  
 They fortified with reverence for the Gods;  
 And they had hopes that overstepped the Grave.

*Christus Consummator* is the description of Our Lord which answers most adequately to the type of doctrine which we have been considering. Men such as Schleiermacher, Coleridge, F. D. Maurice, Westcott cannot and will not deny the working of God's spirit wherever it may be traced, but they did not cease to affirm their faith in Christ as one who completes what is truly but imperfectly present elsewhere. With the teachers I have just mentioned, we may perhaps set another thinker of more recent date, who regarded himself as definitely a disciple of Schleiermacher—Ernst Troeltsch. We shall come back to Troeltsch. Here his name may remind us of the difficulties which in our age beset the attempt to combine the broad outlook of the Romantic Movement with acceptance of the "Absoluteness" of Christianity. On the one hand the area of our knowledge of various cultures and of the religions which have sprung up within these cultures has now been immeasurably increased. On the other the interpretation which Schleiermacher and others put upon Apostolic Christianity itself has ceased to be possible. We can no longer think in their terms. But their doctrine is, as I judge, to this extent still valid: first, if our treatment of the manifold data of religions, past and present, is to be fruitful, we need some general conception of religion to help us, before we can proceed to value and to classify. And in the second place the Romantics were right when they insisted that actual religion is always positive and

specific. A generalised idea is never a substitute for a concrete faith. Nor do we necessarily injure our power of judging, because we ourselves accept a standing ground within the sphere of an actual religion. These two principles do not of themselves constitute an apologetic for the Christian faith. But if they are accepted the way is at least open, and the thought expressed by the words *Christus Consummator* may therefore still have relevance.

### III

#### *PROCESS AND INCARNATION*

We have seen how Schleiermacher vindicated to an unbelieving age the values of the historical faiths of mankind in general, and in particular the supreme value of the historical Christian faith. His general approach enabled him to recognise in Christianity a distinctive Revelation, without committing himself to the defence of what had become indefensible, and he developed a genuine doctrine of the Divine Incarnation in Jesus Christ, albeit widely different from the doctrine which had been fashioned in the Patristic age. When we now turn to Schleiermacher's great critic and contemporary, the philosopher Hegel (1770-1831), we recognise in him many of the tendencies which we have already found in Schleiermacher. Both thinkers bear witness to the new valuation of the historical and the concrete. No less than Schleiermacher, Hegel breaks with the conception of a God external to the world. Like Schleiermacher again, Hegel is profoundly concerned to reinterpret the Christian religion. But Hegel differs from Schleiermacher and excels him in respect of insight into the nature of the historical process, and his firmer hold upon this problem is revealed in his handling of the crucial question of the Incarnation. Schleiermacher looks out upon humanity past and present and in its history he sees a rich and varied picture of individual types of faith, each type maintaining its essential character in virtue of the dominant relation to the Infinite wherein it originated.

The individuality of history here finds ample recognition. Schleiermacher's weakness is revealed when he tries to conceive of the historical order as a process or succession of events. He does, indeed, assert a principle of progress, and this he brings into relation with his doctrine of the originating founder by a theory which is as ingenious as it is unsatisfactory. In the history of the Church, as Schleiermacher sees it, the redemption brought by Christ is ever more completely realised; the Holy Spirit ever more perfectly pervades the whole. But if this is so, how, Schleiermacher asks, does this principle of spiritual progress cohere with the view that we find the canonical and the normative at the beginning? The notion that the primitive as such is normative, Schleiermacher rejects. The primitive Church was a mixed society. "The Divine Spirit", he writes,<sup>1</sup> "was very unequally distributed. For this reason, and also because not every Christian was equally productive in religious ideas, even in the measure of his participation in the common spirit, it was very easily possible (since Jewish and pagan views and maxims were still uneradicated and their antagonism to the Christian spirit could only be recognised gradually) that expositions of religion might be produced which, strictly speaking, were rather Judaism or paganism coloured by Christianity, than Christianity itself." Thus, though primitive Christianity did indeed contain the genuinely Apostolic preaching based upon the experience of the immediate disciples of Jesus Christ, it also contained the "apocryphal", and, as Schleiermacher maintains, both of these in an extreme form. In his view the process of

<sup>1</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, § 129.

Christian history shows the steady growth of the canonical or Apostolic and, alongside this, the parallel disappearance by slow degrees of the "apocryphal", that is to say the heathen and the Jewish. Since these foreign influences as well as genuine Apostolic Christianity were at their height in the first days of the faith, and since later, when generations of Christians had actually been born within the society, the foreign influences tended to lose their power, Schleiermacher contends that he is able to reconcile his two convictions: first, that the supremely normative is to be found at the beginning, and secondly, that in the process of history redemption has been progressively appropriated and better understood. What the theory really shows is the weakness of Schleiermacher's grasp upon the movement of history. Could any student of history, would Schleiermacher himself, maintain that pagan influences were less threatening during the struggles with Gnosticism in the second century, or with Arianism in the fourth, than they had been in the Apostolic age? The history of the Church does not in reality show us, as in Schleiermacher's view it ought to do, the gradual victory of the God-consciousness mediated by Christ, but rather a process of recurring conflict of ideas within the Church. Apostolic tradition, the Old Testament, Greek thought are all present and operative throughout. Sometimes a non-Christian philosophy threatens to obscure the distinctively Christian faith; yet again it provides terms which enable Christian theologians to maintain and elucidate their faith as against the solvents of pagan presuppositions. Schleiermacher sees little of this. There is, in truth, a certain softness in Schleiermacher's piety

and this quality is reflected in his interpretation of history. The note of release is too prominent in his conception of religion. The God-consciousness for Schleiermacher supervenes as the hampering obstacles of the world of sense are allowed to drop away. Struggle and temptation, as we have seen, are allowed no real place in the perfect life of the Redeemer and, so far as believers have been made to share in that redemption, they too have found release from the struggles of the finite world.

That we have learnt to look at history with different eyes is in large measure due to the insight of Hegel. There is a salutary astringent quality in Hegel's doctrine. Struggle, tension, conflict, are transposed into the heart of spiritual reality. The life of the Spirit is movement. The Spirit is one, but by the very law of its being it differentiates itself, makes of itself another, a finite being which fulfils its function within the whole until it reaches the inevitable negation which ends all finite experience. Through negation it returns to the One Spirit from which it came, with which in truth it is identical. The Spirit takes up into itself the struggles, tensions, contradictions, which the dialectical movement has entailed. Nothing is lost. The finite finds its goal and its satisfaction by realising again its identity with the Absolute Spirit. The Infinite Whole is enriched by the experiences of the finite.

At an early age Hegel's attention had been engrossed by the problems of religion. We may further say, without extravagance, that all the labour of his life is an effort to work out a religious interpretation of the universe. In the last ten years of his life (1821-31) he dealt directly with the subject of religion, and four times (1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831) delivered a course of lectures in the University



of Berlin on "The Philosophy of Religion". These lectures were published posthumously, partly from lecture notes, partly from Hegel's manuscripts. We may here remark that Lasson's recent labours on the manuscript sources have made parts of this great work, hitherto obscure, intelligible for the first time, and all earlier editions and translations of earlier editions are now superseded.<sup>1</sup> In an early chapter of this work Hegel takes stock of the present position of theology, and passes comments on the defects of the current theological disciplines. The rational theology of the age professes to be an exegetical theology. Following the great simplification of the Reformation, it too will simplify by allowing only what the Scripture says. We recall Dr Richard Watson—*En sacrum codicem!* Hegel has little difficulty in showing how misleading this procedure really is!<sup>2</sup> In actual fact the understanding has first established its own views for itself and then looks about to see how the words of Scripture may be made to accord with them. Meantime, the actual content of theology tends to be reduced to an empty conception of the Godhead. The spacious scheme of the traditional doctrine has gone. Dogmatic theology is moribund. The doctrine of the Trinity, and the whole conception of the supernatural, are neglected and depreciated. Hegel notes that theologians treat the doctrines of the Church historically, rather than dogmatically or systematically. In Hegel's view the time has come for the philosophy of religion to occupy the place which dogma once had held.

<sup>1</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* (*Sämliche Werke*, herausg. Georg Lasson, Bde XII-XIV, Leipzig 1925-1929).

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* erster Teil: *Begriff der Religion*, p. 37.

Though not identical with, it is really analogous to, the neglected dogmatic of the Church. In early days, as Hegel recalls, philosophers had made their contribution to fashioning the theology of the Church. This co-operation must be carried out anew. The rational theology of his day, though at first sight it might seem likely to be congenial to the philosopher, is, in fact, not his ally but his enemy. The philosopher finds himself closer to the doctrines of positive religion. There is here a certain likeness to Schleiermacher's defence of the positive religions, but it is only partial. For with Hegel, the dogmatic intellectualist element in religion is fundamental. He complains that a theology which, like Schleiermacher's, rests on feeling and intuition, leaves man with a conception of God no less empty than the theology of the rationalists, and remains in peril of relapse into mere subjective emotion. If religion is to be strong, it must maintain the conviction that its doctrine is objective truth.

Now the Christian religion is to Hegel the complete or the Absolute religion. Like Schleiermacher, Hegel does not seek to affirm dogmatically an exclusive position for Christianity as the one revealed religion in contrast to all other faiths. He is rather concerned to interpret the religious history of mankind as a whole, and in this history he finds each stage to have its relative justification. In Christianity, however, as the Absolute religion, the positive elements of truth attained at earlier stages are taken up and conserved. And in this Christian religion there is conveyed to man that absolute and final truth, which is also the principle of the Hegelian philosophy, that finite spirit is, in its essence, one with the Absolute Spirit.

This background of Hegel's general attitude towards the religious history of mankind must not be forgotten when we look in closer detail at his teaching concerning Jesus Christ. Here, however, it is equally important to observe that when Hegel approaches the theme of "The God-man and the Atonement", his starting-point is not the dialectical process of the Spirit, but man as we know him; whereas he has hitherto developed speculatively a doctrine of the threefold movement of the Spirit, with its three realms of Father, Son and Spirit, he now approaches the question from the practical and the empirical side. How, in fact, is this consciousness of the oneness of human and Divine nature to be brought home to man as he is in his finite state? The situation demands an actual empirical manifestation of the universal. Such manifestation, if it is to reach us, can only be in human form—in one man who may be recognised for something more than a teacher, and something more than a being merely higher than man. He needs to be the highest idea of all: God's Son: the God-man! "This individual is He alone. There are not several such....The finest thing in the Christian religion is the absolute transfiguration of Finitude brought within men's contemplation, so that each man can give an account of it and each man can be conscious of it."<sup>1</sup> In these strong expressions Hegel, without doubt, meant to endorse and justify the exclusive dignity which Christian doctrine and devotion have bestowed upon Christ. He now proceeds to the actual Person of Jesus Christ; the "one individual" who has just been mentioned. How, he asks, can man be assured that this Jesus Christ really

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* dritter Teil: *Die Absolute Religion*, p. 134.

is the Divine Idea? That is a question which we cannot answer from the historical datum of Jesus Christ. We must pass on beyond the Jesus of history to the creation of the Church, before we are in a position to deal with the matter. To suppose that the question could be answered by appeal to any sort of external confirmation—in the world of Nature, for instance—would be a mistake of a most serious kind; for it would spring from a misconception of the nature of Spirit. No such evidence would ever suffice to raise faith above all possible doubt. Postponing, therefore, the question of the authentication of Christ's Person until its discussion has become relevant and possible, Hegel now turns to the teaching of the Jesus of the Gospels. This teaching is never to be treated in isolation from the life and the death of Jesus. The Person, his life and his death make the teaching an organic whole. Hegel deals plainly, directly and most effectively with the teaching of Jesus and with unerring tact singles out the decisive notes of the Gospel ethic. The ruling principle is the reversal of earthly human judgment. The Romans ruled the world into which Jesus Christ came. But Jesus came to the simple, common folk to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." The single principle of his ethic is love—no mere love for mankind in general, but love for this man and that, each in his peculiar relationships. The positive ethic of the Gospel is then shown to have its correlative negations, illustrated by the judgment on the authorities of Judaism and the demand for renunciation of the ties even of family and home. Thirdly, Hegel emphasises—mainly with reference to Johannine texts—

the teaching of Jesus on himself. "I and the Father are One." "All things are given to me of my Father." These are great claims, but as yet, so Hegel argues, Jesus speaks as man and not more than man. He knows and proclaims God's will, and knows his own harmony therewith.<sup>1</sup> This heroic life concludes with the martyr's death upon the Cross. Jesus bears final witness to the truth when the Romans lift him upon the gallows.

Now we may say all this of Jesus Christ and yet fail to reach what for Hegel is the true religious interpretation of his Person.<sup>2</sup> For all that has been said hitherto is common ground to believer and unbeliever. We have not yet necessarily gone beyond the recognition that Jesus was a supreme teacher, such as Socrates, or it may be a Divine messenger, such as Moslems allow Jesus to have been. For the Christian Church Jesus Christ is the God-man. What can warrant us in taking this further step? In agreement with crucial passages in the New Testament, Hegel finds the necessary point of departure in the death of Christ. According to our interpretation of the death will be the difference between the external historical interpretation and that higher view which sees in him the revelation of the Divine nature. Christ's death was the end of a finite life. It was an end which involved extreme humiliation: Jesus Christ, he who had preached the Kingdom of Heaven, hangs upon a gallows erected by the rulers of the world. The subject of this humiliation is the Divine Idea. In the Cross the finitude of man is revealed. Christ's death was a complete surrender of the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* dritter Teil: *Die Absolute Religion*, pp. 148 and 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 154.

natural will; all that the world counts great and valuable was by his death buried in the grave of the spirit. But in this surrender of the natural, we are to see that supreme glory of the Christian faith, the transfiguration of the finite. Love is the power which remained victorious on the Cross. It was expedient that Christ should go away in order that the finite should become one in love with the infinite. This was no mere individual experience of Jesus. It was an essential moment in Christ's death that it was a death for others, that is to say that it has objective value for mankind. The meaning which Hegel finds in that doctrine is this: We start from a state in which finite men stand over against God. In that death man, the finite, is set as a movement in God Himself. The death effects the at-one-ment. Through it He reconciles the world, and—I quote Hegel's words—"eternally reconciles Himself with Himself".<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This means that the finite returns to its true self, and becomes Spirit. Death, which is the negation of the finite, is itself negated, and this negation of the negation is a moment in the nature of God Himself. So Hegel interprets the Resurrection and Heavenly Session of Jesus Christ.

Through this history, the nature of God Himself was interpreted and made clear to the Church. The meaning of the history—and this is the heart of Hegel's contention—is that it is the history of God. God is absolute movement, and this movement is set forth in relation to this Individual. Hegel quotes a Lutheran hymn, "Gott selbst ist tot", and interprets it to mean that the human and the finite itself falls within the being of God. This, according

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* dritter Teil: *Die Absolute Religion*, p. 166.

to Hegel, is the truth of the Christian religion, which, in its essentials, the Church embraced, when it believed on Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and exalted to God's right hand.<sup>1</sup>

Lasson complains that Hegel has been unfairly treated by the theologians; that they have mistaken his intentions and undervalued his teachings. Whether or not theologians have yet learned what they might learn from Hegel, no one doubts that his influence upon theology has already been immense. Yet the nature of that influence would have been a disappointment to Hegel. He himself noted it as a sign of failing power in the theology of his day that dogma was studied historically, rather than by rational exposition and defence. Ontological dogma—and nothing less—was at Hegel's heart. Yet it is in the history of Christian dogma rather than in Dogmatics that Hegel's influence has been at its strongest. This paradoxical outcome of his work is, I think, explained by the nature of his teaching, which was, in fact, an ontological interpretation of the process of history rather than a theology or a Christology as Christian doctrine has understood them. It was natural that the criticism should be made that Hegel's doctrine was pantheistic in tendency. Hegel defends himself against the charge by maintaining that the world of Nature, though in some sort an off-shoot of the Absolute Spirit, is yet in his philosophy so subordinated to the realm of conscious spirit that it may rightly be spoken of as the created world. But though Hegel's language is sometimes difficult there can be no mistaking his fundamental doctrine of Spirit. Spirit is a single self-differentiating unity. Reality lies in

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 157 f., cf. p. 167.

the dialectical movement of Spirit. Saving truth for man is the unity of God and man, a unity embracing within itself varieties of finite experience. Hegel's noble insistence on his principle that the struggles and contradictions of finite Spirit all ultimately accrue to the One Absolute Spirit gave an impulse to the study of history viewed as a process. History is the movement, differentiation, synthesis of Spirit through the process of Time. The Tübingen School represents the most lastingly influential outcome of Hegel's work in the theological sphere. Even when the Tübingen reconstruction of early Christian history was disproved and its philosophy discredited, the achievement lived on in the great histories of Dorner, Harnack, Loofs: histories which could never have been written if Baur—and therefore if Hegel—had not gone before. In doctrine proper Hegel has counted for less. We may say of him as theologian *Felix opportunitate mortis*. He died in 1831, four years before the youthful Strauss published his *Life of Jesus*. There is no doubt that Strauss's book would have offended Hegel. Strauss is of another spirit. It is less clear what standing-ground Hegel would have had for resisting the drastic conclusions of the younger disciple.

Strauss introduced a new element into the situation. For half a century and more, there had been discussion of critical problems in the Synoptic Gospels. More recently doubts had been expressed with regard to the authorship and historical value of St John's Gospel. But Bretschneider's doubts about St John had been tentatively expressed, and he later abandoned them. The synoptic problem had as yet led to no decisive conclusions. It may



be said that in the early decades of the eighteenth century there was no serious or widespread doubt that the Gospels as a whole, with whatever qualifications, did tell about the real Jesus. Neither Schleiermacher nor Hegel needed to pay serious attention to a fundamental scepticism. It is impossible to be more radically sceptical than the Strauss of the *Life of Jesus*. New Testament exegesis had arrived at an impasse over the question of the miraculous. The conservative defence of the literal interpretation of the texts failed to satisfy the mind of an age which had grown sensitive to the difficulties of alleged interferences with the course of Nature. The rationalistic exegesis, on the other hand, failed to do justice to the obvious interests and intentions of the narrator. By Strauss's theory that the Gospels are primarily and principally to be explained as mythical creations of the early Church, it seemed possible to satisfy at once the objections to which both schools were exposed. The miraculous, banished from the plane of history, could be allowed full scope in the realm of fantasy and imagination. The Gospels belonged to the world of myth. Behind the mythical embellishments Strauss allows us to discern a virtuous teacher, conceived in the manner of the earlier rationalism—not more.

The history of Gospel criticism lies, perforce, outside the scope of these lectures, except in so far as the progress of scholarship had a direct bearing upon doctrinal questions. Here, however, we may for a moment pause to note the interesting coincidence that the same year which saw the appearance of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* saw also the establishment of the correct solution of the synoptic

problem. For it was in 1835 that Lachmann showed in principle that the variations and resemblances in order between the first three Gospels were satisfactorily accounted for on the hypothesis that Mark was a common source of Matthew and Luke. Some time was yet to elapse before this conclusion was widely recognised.

That which most concerns us here in Strauss's book is his contention that the essential positions of Hegel's philosophy of religion were not imperilled by his negative conclusions with regard to the Gospels and the historic Jesus. Strauss tested Hegel's theology at a crucial point. Hegel himself in his exposition of Christianity unmistakably starts from the Jesus Christ of the Gospels. From this starting-point he believes himself able to advance to a religious doctrine analogous to the doctrine which he has already established in speculation. But if the historical connexion which Hegel certainly presupposes in this part of his work should become, in consequence of critical theories, an embarrassment and a difficulty, does Hegel's philosophy involve a sufficiently close interest in the historical starting-point, to be seriously disturbed or to prompt any fresh attempt to understand the original figure from which Hegel himself started? May it not even be maintained that the philosophical religion gains in coherence, when it is no longer tied to a single figure within the whole process of the Spirit? It is not clear that Hegel himself in strictness allows more to the event than that it adequately symbolises the process. If then the event is essentially symbolic, it seems not to matter much how far, and in what sense, the actual history is true. The essential point is not the Incarnate Christ, but

the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in humanity. Such is Strauss's contention. We will let him speak for himself. "This is the key to the whole of Christology", he writes, "that as subject to the predicate which the Church assigns to Christ, we place, instead of an individual, an idea, but an idea which is an existence in reality, not in the mind only, like that of Kant. In an individual, a God-man, the properties and functions which the Church ascribes to Christ contradict themselves; in the idea of the race they perfectly agree. Humanity is the union of the two natures—God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinitude; it is the child of the visible Mother, and the invisible Father, Nature and Spirit; it is the worker of miracles, in so far as in the course of human history the Spirit more and more completely subjugates Nature both within and around man until it lies before him as the inert matter on which he exercises his active power; it is the sinless existence, for the course of its development is a blameless one, pollution cleaves to the individual only, and does not touch the race or its history. It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven. For, from the negation of its phenomenal life there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life. From the suppression of its mortality as a personal, national and terrestrial spirit arises its union with the infinite spirit of the heavens. By faith in this Christ, especially in His death and resurrection, man is justified before God; that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity the individual man participates in the divinely human life of the species."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, English trans. by George Eliot, § 151, p. 780.

These last words may show how easy it would be for Strauss to slip from the spiritual philosophy which he then professed to the pure naturalism of his later years. But his interpretation of Hegel's Christology as being a truth and doctrine of the race rather than of Jesus Christ was not an eccentricity. It tends to recur in theology whenever Hegel's influence has been dominant, even with writers who have been very seriously concerned to conserve the values of historical Christianity. We may take an example from the philosophical literature of our own country. Edward Caird writes with deep reverence for Jesus Christ. His ethical teaching is impregnated with the spirit of the Gospels. Yet, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that in his thought he has in the last resort no real place for a doctrine of Jesus Christ. True, indeed, it is that he recognises, nay, emphasises, the advance which was made by the theology of the early Christian centuries; the controversies of that age were, he maintains, no mere arguments about words, but about that most fundamental of all questions—the relation of God and man. The theology took the form of a teaching about Jesus Christ, but this, he indicates not obscurely, was a limitation which we must transcend. The real achievement of Christianity was, as he puts it, that "it made even the existence of evil explicable, as a necessary step in the development of the finite spirit to a consciousness of the divine principle which is realising itself in and through its finitude".<sup>1</sup> In these words we recognise at once the fundamental idea of Hegel. Now, how does he relate this to the historical

<sup>1</sup> E. Caird, *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, vol. II, pp. 350 ff.

Christ? The earliest Christianity, he tells us, possessed this primary idea, "but it was at first wrapped up in the conscious relation of the individual to One (that is Christ) in whom it seemed once for all to be embodied". He allows that relation to an individual person may be the means of bringing home deeper meanings to man than he could have received in any other way. Yet so long as the personal relation is not transcended, I think we may fairly say superseded, by "intelligent appropriation" of the principle, man's grasp of the truth of the Christian religion, as Caird understands it, is really imperfect. Jesus Christ is in the end an educational symbol which points to the ground truth of the unity of God and man. Caird teaches in the end a doctrine of Incarnation in history, but scarcely a doctrine of a historical Incarnation.

Here, once again, comparison with Schleiermacher is instructive. It would be impossible to develop Schleiermacher's Christology, as Strauss, Caird and others have developed Hegel's, without abandoning his entire position. In his doctrine of the Trinity, Schleiermacher inclines to modalism: the Trinitarian affirmation should not be understood to relate to God's essential nature, but it is true when we think of God as made known to man. There was a unique, incomparable presence of God in Jesus Christ. Again, God is uniquely present as Spirit in the fellowship of the Church. The Trinitarian formula is therefore to be affirmed and the revelation in history of God as Son and as Spirit is really determinative of the Christian's faith throughout. There is no Christianity without Jesus Christ. But though the Trinity in this sense is to be affirmed, we dare not carry this true distinction

into the essence of the Eternal and Infinite Godhead. Now, in one respect, Hegel's Trinitarian doctrine is nearer to the Catholic doctrine than that of Schleiermacher in that differentiation into Father, Son and Spirit is really differentiation within the Godhead itself. Hegel however, at this point in agreement with Schleiermacher, relates his doctrine essentially to the historical process, but, whereas with Schleiermacher Jesus Christ brought about a new relation between God and man, with Hegel the most that we seem to be entitled to say is that Jesus Christ has been an effective historical symbol of the true relation within the Godhead between finite Spirit and infinite Spirit.

The history of the Hegelian philosophy, in the last hundred years, has been remarkable. It has been regarded as a support for traditional orthodox Christianity. This tendency had been strongest in Hegel's own lifetime, and appears to have had his countenance; but it has also been developed as an instrument for an extreme negative criticism of Christianity. Again, it has been a chief source of idealistic theories of reality; but it has also afforded a starting-point for the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx. Developments so diverse bear testimony to Hegel's grasp of leading ideas characteristic of the age, but they encourage doubts as to whether real ambiguities do not lurk in his thought.

Ambiguities seem to appear at the points which, theologically, are of central importance. Thus, in regard to God or the Absolute Spirit, it is not clear whether Hegel intended to justify belief in conscious mind as the groundwork of reality, or whether the Absolute Spirit should be

thought of as attaining self-consciousness only in the course of the process. Then again Hegel defends the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Individuals, he expressly says, are for ever citizens of God's Kingdom. Yet, the affirmation must be interpreted in the light of his general doctrine of Spirit, and that seems to leave it at least doubtful how far a personal immortality is really meant. The death of Christ is spoken of in full Christian language as God's reconciliation of the world. But Hegel himself glosses the words "the world" with the interpretative comment that God reconciles himself, and this interpretation is necessary to his general doctrine. His doctrine is not so much a doctrine of a union of God and man, as a doctrine that God and man are in truth a unity, one being.

A recent critic has summed up the problem of Hegel's relation to Christianity in these words: "Hegel wished to maintain the content of the Christian Revelation—the Trinity, the Incarnation, Regeneration—while denying its theological foundation."<sup>1</sup> That expresses concisely, and I think not unfairly, the problem which Hegel's philosophy of religion presents to Christian theologians. Hegel has true insight into certain principles essential to a Christian theology. Thus he thinks in terms of mankind, and his Christology is vitally linked with the conception of the race. We may be convinced that Strauss was wrong when he argued that the idea of humanity is a sufficient substitute for the Person of Christ, but a Christian theologian will not dispute the principle that the Person of Jesus Christ is only to be understood in relation to the

<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Krüger in *Theol. Rundschau* (1935), Heft 5, p. 310.

human race. Again it was a sound instinct which led Hegel to delay his treatment of Christology until he came to deal with the Cross and the Resurrection. We may feel the gravest misgivings as to Hegel's interpretation of the primitive faith, but Hegel surely saw a truth which Schleiermacher missed, when he insisted that the Cross and the sequel of the Cross were crucial to the rise of the Church's faith.

The central issue with which Hegel confronts us is nothing less than the problem with which the whole nineteenth century has wrestled and which it has handed on to us still unmastered: the idea of process, its meaning and interpretation and its relation to other ideas.

Hegel's own doctrine of the process of Spirit rests primarily upon the movement of man's consciousness in history. The steady growth of the idea of evolution in the course of the nineteenth century as an account of the origin of species, has reinforced the idea of process from the side of biology and made it a governing principle of all our thought. We are now placed in a world of ideas, widely different from that of Christian tradition. I do not see how we can avoid the conclusion that while the idea of process has helped us in many ways it raises very formidable problems for a Theology which professes itself Christian. Christian Theology may react, and has reacted in different ways. It may sense danger and seek to keep the idea of process as far as possible outside of this domain. Let the world think in these terms if it will, nay, let us ourselves think in these terms as ordinary students and plain men, but let us reserve a sanctuary of absolute un-



changing truth where we may still worship and adore! Others would let in the idea of evolution or process in full flood, finding in it not so much a challenge or a source of difficulty, as a new form for faith: Incarnation, God in the flesh, the immanent Spirit informing and guiding the process first of biological, and then of historical, evolution. May not the two ideas fuse and interpret one another? The question which confronts those who think thus is, whether such a theology can find room for a doctrine of a Person who lived within the process, to whom we could rightly give the kind of centrality which the Christian religion has given to Jesus Christ. If it is not possible to give in terms of evolution an answer, which in principle affirms that centrality, it will then be necessary to ask whether the Theology of the future must learn to dispense with a belief in a historical Incarnation, or whether it is still open to us, while accepting the idea of evolution, legitimately to use other categories in which to express our faith.

We shall come back to these questions. But first we must turn to observe how the classical formulations of the doctrine of the Incarnation have been affected by the fresh movements of thought and by the progress of historical knowledge, and in what ways Theologians have attempted to adapt them to new conditions.

## IV

### *CREEDS, CONFESSIONS AND THE NEW LEARNING*

The doctrinal interpretations of the Person of Jesus Christ put forward by Schleiermacher and Hegel found their place in original efforts to grasp the nature of the Christian religion in its relation to the whole world of human experience. Each of these thinkers, it is hardly necessary to say, holds an independent position of his own in the history of thought, and each works out his Christology without any attempt at close conformity with dogmatic tradition. The same may be said of another theologian whose teaching we have yet to consider—Albrecht Ritschl. The types of doctrine which are to engage our attention now are all in varying degrees conditioned by the aim of understanding, interpreting and in the main maintaining that body of traditional doctrine on the Person of Jesus Christ, which had found expression in the Catholic Creeds and the Church Confessions of the Reformation era. There is, of course, no difference in formal doctrine as to the Person of Christ between these two sets of authorities. The orthodoxy of the Confession of Augsburg, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Westminster Confession is unimpeachable. The reformers took over without question conciliar definitions—not indeed that they highly regarded conciliar authority as such, for General Councils “may err, and sometimes have

erred, even in things pertaining unto God" (Art. xxi), but they were satisfied that the orthodox definitions rested upon a sufficient Scriptural foundation: "The Three Creeds . . . ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture" (Art. viii). Thus in the official standards of the great Churches which issued from the Reformation, no less than in the Roman Church, the dogmatic definitions of the Patristic age retain their place. In modern, as in ancient times, agreement in credal profession has proved to be compatible with much difference in interpretation. The sacramental controversies of the sixteenth century between the two great Protestant Confessions issued in controversy on the doctrine of the Incarnation. Lutherans underlined, and from the standpoint of Chalcedonian orthodoxy over-emphasised the principle of *communicatio idiomatum*, in order to secure, as it seemed, the conviction that in the Lord Jesus the Godhead was present in its fullness; whereas the Reformed more carefully guarded the distinction of the two natures, so that even in the Incarnate Person, God remained, awful and sublime, conjoined but not blended with the humanity which He had assumed. These differences, though by no means insignificant, were yet differences within the dogmatic tradition. The dogmatic structure, so far as it concerned the Trinity and the Incarnation, was maintained in its entirety. The Socinian teaching, which repudiated the full Divinity of Jesus Christ, lurked upon the outskirts of orthodox Protestantism, and whatever success might attend its efforts, it was firmly repudiated by the authorities, as it was forbidden by the formularies, of the great

Churches. The orthodox formularies held their place. They hold it still to-day.

But already by the beginning of our period, the early nineteenth century, a great change had passed over the Churches. The formularies remained, but their actual status in Church life had been seriously weakened. In the first place, the Pietistic movement had withdrawn the interest of its numerous adherents from the systematic doctrine of the Church. The movement was not, in intention, unorthodox, nor was it in general unwilling to accept the orthodox Confessions, but Pietists lived by a few simple principles of religious faith: the Bible, studied, meditated upon, and preached as God's Word to sinful man; the redemptive death of Jesus Christ for sinners on the Cross; and the necessity of conversion for each individual soul. It was all too possible to accept a correct belief, and to miss the faith which justifies and saves. It was not the mission of Pietism to build up or defend sound doctrine.

More serious had been the effect of eighteenth-century rationalism. The Reformation had appealed to the sole and sufficient authority of Holy Scripture, and its formularies acknowledged throughout their own subordinate character. When Confession differed from Confession in the conclusions which they drew from Scripture, who could decide between them?

*Hic liber est in quo quaerit sua dogmata quisque,  
Invenit et pariter dogmata quisque sua.*

But the Bible, it must be presumed, had a meaning at which with the help of sound learning it should be possible to arrive. And if the contrast were once drawn between

the Bible on the one hand, and the contending Confessions on the other, a Protestant could scarcely refuse to acquiesce in a relative depreciation of his Confession. It was Chillingworth, an Anglican Liberal, a friend of Archbishop Laud's, who coined the phrase: "The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the Religion of Protestants!"<sup>1</sup> In the latter half of the seventeenth century the revolt against confessional authority had already touched the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. The subordinationism of Scripture was compared with the co-equal Trinity of orthodoxy. Dr Samuel Clarke openly criticised orthodox Trinitarianism and proposed to reform the dogmatic and devotional language of the Church. Not less important was the contribution of the Jesuit Father Petavius, who called attention to the strangely uncertain utterances of ante-Nicene Theology on the Person of the Son. Not everyone was convinced that the stout Anglican champion of the Nicene faith, Bishop Bull, had disposed of the Jesuit, or of like-minded writers on the Protestant side, Sandius, Zuicker, Episcopius. For thoroughgoing Deism the whole of the doctrinal system was an irrelevant addition to the few and simple necessary truths of religion. But even where Deist negations were rejected, a new consciousness arose that dogma had not been one and immutable through history, and this often encouraged an attitude of indifferentism on the doctrinal issue. The most striking illustration of the change in doctrinal attitude is to be found in the history of the English Presbyterian congregations, which from a position of high orthodoxy in the first years of their separate existence after the

<sup>1</sup> W. Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants* (1638), c. vi, § 56.

Restoration passed through the stage of Arianism into pronounced Unitarianism. Avowed Unitarianism was not unknown within the Church of England, though when it appeared it called forth protest. More generally characteristic of the Church was an unwillingness to press doctrinal differences. Thus we find John Hey, our first Norrissian Professor (1780-95), in those Theological lectures to which I have already referred, minimising the unorthodoxy of Dr Clarke which had been so grave a scandal at the beginning of the eighteenth century. "I suppose anyone", he declared, "might now preach Dr Clarke's doctrine without being thought irregular."<sup>1</sup> He himself actually makes a principle of the "unintelligibility" of the doctrines of the Church: "It might tend to promote moderation, and, in the end, agreement, if we were industriously on all occasions to represent our own Doctrine as wholly *unintelligible*." "Bishop Pearson and Dr Waterland", he thinks, "would have written with greater effect, if they had taken occasion, from time to time, to say, that, though they exposed the misrepresentations of others, they did not pretend to have any clear ideas of their own Doctrine."<sup>2</sup> Hey reduces positive exposition of doctrine to the barest minimum. The greater part of each lecture is devoted to a historical account of the doctrine in question, and at the conclusion the question is raised what concessions might be made to promote religious unity, and the reconciliation of conscientious Dissenters. That the concessions he proposed were considerable is well illustrated by the Lecture on Article 11: "Of the Word or

<sup>1</sup> J. Hey, *Lectures on Divinity*, vol. II, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 253.

Son of God, which was made very Man." "As it seems to be of great consequence", he writes, "that we *speak* the same thing, and as men are generally more affected by *sounds* than ideas, we might propose it as a question, whether the word *God*, in such expressions as '*God the Son*' and '*God the Holy Ghost*', could be omitted in our offices without a material fault. Though Christ seems to us to be *called* God in several places, yet there is some *dispute* on that head; and, for the sake of *Unity*, we would pay all possible *respect* to the opinions of our adversaries. I should imagine, that such an omission would tend, almost as much as anything, to mollify and conciliate."<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt but that similar hopes and aspirations were widespread at the end of the eighteenth century. Cambridge ordinands, we are told, were expected by the Bishops to attend Professor Hey's lectures.<sup>2</sup> The lectures themselves were published and circulated widely.<sup>3</sup> The conditions of doctrinal teaching were not very different in many of the theological schools of Protestant Germany. *Mutatis mutandis* Hey's lectures represent the same type of doctrinal teaching as that which moved Hegel's criticisms in Germany a generation later.

Hey's hopes of a doctrinal *eirenicon* were not to be fulfilled. The nineteenth century witnessed what to most observers of the eighteenth century would have been wholly unexpected: a strong reassertion of the decayed Credal and Confessional Theology. Though this revival

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* vol. II, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> D. A. Winstanley, *Unreformed Cambridge*, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that they still survive in the current catalogue of the publications of the Cambridge University Press.

did not achieve all that it set out to achieve, it constitutes a not unimportant element in the doctrinal history of our period and we must now take some account of its bearing upon Christological doctrine.

In certain important respects, the thinkers we have lately been considering prepared the way. In so far as their teaching was a polemic against dominant tendencies of the eighteenth century it might well seem to be an ally of the time-honoured traditions which the irreverent rationalists had scorned. The enemies who had been responsible for the decline of the ancient order had had their answer, and if the conclusion of the Romanticists themselves seemed to be, as Newman said in the case of Coleridge, "heathen, rather than Christian", yet it might be recognized, to quote Newman again, that they had "instilled a higher philosophy into inquiring minds, than they had hitherto been accustomed to accept", and "in this way had made trial of their age and succeeded in interesting its genius in the cause of Catholic truth".<sup>1</sup> Romanticism had prepared the way, and even though it had failed to occupy again the deserted citadel in full force, it had at least awakened sympathy for the Church and its doctrines. A renewed appeal to the principle of dogmatic authority both in Germany and in this country coincided with an ebb in the tide of the Romantic Movement and the beginning of a more dangerously negative temper. By the fourth decade of the century it seemed that the time had now come to do battle in earnest with the unbelieving spirit of the age, and to raise anew the

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua* (ed. Wilfred Ward, 1913), p. 195.



ancient banner of the Church. To achieve success, it was necessary not only to consider the foe without, but also to restore discipline within. The leaven of the eighteenth century must be searched out and expelled. Evangelicalism was well-meaning but impotent against the forces of the modern world. Latitudinarianism played directly into the enemies' hands. Thus it was no accident that Newman saw the sign of anti-Christ in Hampden's Bampton Lectures of 1832 with their characteristic distinction between the Christian religion embodied in Scripture, and the human logical deductions therefrom of scholastic divinity. This was the very distinction which it was necessary to disallow. The system of the Church, once reaffirmed, could hold its own, but the present position was far too perilous to admit of tolerating within the Church what must be apprehended as disloyalty. From the time of the controversy (1783-90) between Bishop Horsley of St Asaph and the Unitarian divine, Dr Priestley, until about the middle of the nineteenth century, there was but little direct treatment of the doctrine of Christ's Person in this country. During the first stage of the Oxford Movement, interest was concentrated upon the idea of the Church and its authority. The doctrine of Christ's Person was not directly in question. But in the negative reaction which followed upon the close of the first phase of the movement, a good deal of attention was directed towards the new Radicalism in German theology and Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (translated into English by Miss Barber and George Eliot and published in 1846) began to play a part in the religious situation in England, as well as in Germany. From within the Tractarian Movement Strauss's book received

some notice from R. I. Wilberforce in his Bampton Lectures.<sup>1</sup> To Wilberforce Strauss is an extreme representative of the Rationalism which substituted "that relation to God which we have by creation and nature" for "that which is given us through Mediation and Grace." Strauss was criticised from a different point of view by F. D. Maurice, and, lastly, Strauss was a main cause of the full statement and defence of the Catholic doctrine of the Person of Christ by Canon Liddon in the Bampton Lectures of 1866 on *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*.

The argument of this great apologetic work, for a quarter of a century a dogmatic classic of the High Church party, hinges upon the claims of Jesus Christ. Liddon contends that, in the Gospels, Jesus of Nazareth makes claims for his own Person which are of such a character that they can only be satisfied by one of two hypotheses: either he was an impostor, or he was, what Catholic theology affirms him to be, God Incarnate. *Christus si non Deus, non bonus*. At every point the lectures are concerned to present this dilemma. Either the agnostic undogmatic world of contemporary Europe must go further than it was yet inclined to do, and deny the moral excellence of Christ, or it must fall into line once again with the full doctrine of the Church. Liddon felt himself to be in a world which was becoming increasingly antagonistic to traditional Christianity. This antagonism he seeks to overcome, partly by tracing the negative movement back to its source, but mainly by reasserting

<sup>1</sup> R. I. Wilberforce, Bampton Lectures, *The Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London, 1848), ch. xrv.

without qualification the doctrinal position of the ancient Church. A dangerous laxity in belief springing from a moral weakness which has refused to face the main issue of faith in Christ is, he thinks, partly answerable for the situation; scarcely less so is "the earnest but short-sighted piety, which imagines that it can dare actively to exercise thought on the Christian Revelation, and withal to ignore those ripe decisions which we owe to the illuminated mind of Primitive Christendom".<sup>1</sup> Salvation lies in a return to those ripe decisions. The position to be maintained is that "Our Lord Jesus Christ, being truly and perfectly Man, is also, according to His Higher Pre-existent Nature Very and Eternal God; since it was the Second Person of the Ever Blessed Trinity, Who, at the Incarnation, robed Himself with a Human Body and a Human Soul".<sup>2</sup> This doctrine is stated and defended in its full extent, and inferences which may fairly be supposed to be deducible therefrom are deduced. Jesus Christ, that Person of whom we read in the New Testament, was God and Man, one Person in two natures, and all the qualities and attributes appropriate to each of the two natures were his: because Jesus Christ was Man, he could truly experience the pains and joys of human life; because Jesus Christ was God, he was in possession of all the Divine attributes, not only those of holiness, love and justice, but also those of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.

Those who to-day read the great preacher's Bampton

<sup>1</sup> H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (4th ed. 1869), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 33 f.

Lectures—and I suppose that they are few—are likely to be affected by his argument in a direction the opposite to that which he himself intended. But the book has its value still, both as an impressive statement of a great system, and also as a clear exposition of problems which a strict orthodoxy must entail. Thus, Jesus Christ is directly and without qualification God. He is also Man. But it is not to be supposed that the humanity imposed limit or change upon the Divine attributes. *Salva proprietate utriusque naturae et substantiae et in unam coeunte personam suscepta est a maiestate humilitas*.<sup>1</sup> It follows that the Divine attributes of omnipotence and omniscience are to be ascribed to the Incarnate Person Jesus Christ. Now there is in the Gospels a text which affirms that “of that day and that hour”—the day of judgment—“knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” Liddon notes the difficulty and the differing solutions which have been advanced by orthodox Fathers. He hesitates to follow the bold lead of St Augustine and St Ambrose when they maintain that Jesus Christ really did know what, for sufficient reasons, he said he did not know, and is disposed to admit that on this particular occasion Our Lord’s Human Soul was denied knowledge on a certain point. But this admission is restricted within the narrowest limits. “For the Gospel history implies”, says Liddon, “that the knowledge infused into the Human Soul of Jesus was ordinarily and practically equivalent to omniscience.”<sup>2</sup> His ignorance on this particular occasion was quite exceptional. “If

<sup>1</sup> Leo’s Tome, c. iii *init.*

<sup>2</sup> H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord*, p. 466.

then His human intellect, flooded as it was by the infusion of boundless light streaming from His Deity, was denied, at a particular time, knowledge of the date of a particular future event, this may well be compared with that deprivation of the consolations of Deity, to which His Human Affections and Will were exposed when He hung dying on the Cross." Finally we are warned thus: "That [Jesus] was ever completely ignorant of aught else, or that He was ignorant on this point at any other time, are inferences for which we have no warrant, and which we make at our peril."<sup>1</sup> With these safeguards the Son's ignorance, though just not denied, is reduced to vanishing point. The supposition that Jesus of Nazareth could ever have made a statement involving not merely limitation of knowledge but liability to error is definitely and vigorously repudiated. If once we allow ourselves to entertain the possibility that Jesus Christ may have made a statement implying error, all is over with faith in his true authority. Liddon takes his example from the controversy which was then in full flood on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The question, he argues, is decided by Christ's reference to the Pentateuch as the Law of Moses, and he presses the dilemma that "we have really to choose between the infallibility, moral no less than intellectual, of Jesus Christ our Lord on the one hand, and the conjectural speculations of critics, of whatever degree of critical eminence, on the other".<sup>2</sup> No doubt we shall agree to-day that Liddon was allowing himself to use conciliar definitions for a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 467.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 471.

purpose which they were not intended to serve. Questions of historical and literary criticism such as the authorship of the Pentateuch were not in the minds of the framers of those definitions, and we shall not allow our attitude to the Creeds, for example, to be decided by considerations of this kind. We shall claim a liberty which Liddon would not have allowed. But Liddon's book has made its contribution, as every work carried through with labour, learning and conviction is bound to do. However wrong the construction may now be judged to be, it illustrates its author's power of constructive, dogmatic criticism and his insight into religious problems. And it has for us the further value, that it shows us what happens when the traditional position is consistently maintained in the face of the new issues which the nineteenth century presented to the Church. The conciliar definitions may not have been framed to decide the questions to which Liddon applied them, but Liddon was thus far justified, that if the conciliar definitions are taken strictly, it does follow that the Incarnate Person Jesus Christ is to be thought of as possessed of all the Divine attributes. In the conciliar age, conditions were such that there was no overwhelming difficulty in ascribing these attributes to the central Figure of the Gospels. Against his will, Liddon has proved how very differently situated we are to-day, and how great a change is necessary if the doctrine of Christ's Divinity is to have meaning in our age.

Doctrinal rigorism of the kind represented by Liddon was not the only outcome of the renewed appreciation of the orthodox Christology which marked the nineteenth century. More directly interesting to us now are the

various attempts which have been made to adapt the ancient formularies to later conditions of thought. Foremost among such attempts must be placed the type of Christological doctrine described as Kenotic. Though Kenotic doctrine is no longer so much in favour as it was, I should think it probable that a majority to-day of those among us who have a Christology which they are prepared to state and to defend are still Kenoticists. Bishop Gore's championship of this type of Christology has made it current coin in important sections of the Anglican Communion. Among the Free Churches it has been defended by Dr Fairbairn.<sup>1</sup> More recently a pronounced form of Kenotic doctrine has been adopted by Dr H. R. Mackintosh in his well-known work on *The Person of Jesus Christ*. And among those who formally repudiate the principle, there are some who, I believe, in fact presuppose it in their Christology. Dr Temple, for instance, in *Christus Veritas* has made a very forcible criticism of Kenotic doctrine from the side of theology proper, but when he comes to develop his doctrine of the Incarnate Person he puts forward statements which, as I have argued at length elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> appear to presuppose that Kenotic principle which on theological grounds has been repudiated.

For the origins of this doctrinal tendency we must look once more beyond our own borders to Protestant Germany. The first systematic statement of Kenoticism was

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Bruce's weighty book, *The Humiliation of Christ* (Edinburgh, 1881), though critical in its attitude to Kenotic doctrine, testifies to the widespread influence of this tendency in Christology.

<sup>2</sup> *Mysterium Christi* (ed. G. K. A. Bell and A. Deissmann, 1930), pp. 134 ff.

put out by the Lutheran theologian Thomasius of Erlangen in his *Beiträge zur kirchlichen Christologie* (1845). After encountering considerable criticism, the doctrine assumed what may be taken to be its classical form in the work, *Christi Person und Werk* (1853-61), by the same divine. Thomasius's followers have included Lutherans such as Luthardt and Delitzsch, the Reformed divines Godet and Ebrard, as well as the British theologians I have already mentioned.

A fundamental interest of this type of doctrine has been, in the first place, to secure a conviction that the subject of the experience of the central Figure of the Gospels is, as in the traditional scheme, identically the Eternal Word, the Second Person in the Trinity; and at the same time to do justice to the reality of the human experience of Jesus in its local and temporal setting, while yet avoiding the seeming unreality of one "Person" living simultaneously in two realms of consciousness. A radical solution is found in the conception that the Eternal Word at the Incarnation imposed limitation upon himself. He not only assumed human nature, as the orthodox doctrine affirms, he also therewith and thereby, without ceasing to be God, surrendered the Divine form of existence, and the Divine glory which had been his eternally with the Father.<sup>1</sup> The Logos Incarnate, Thomasius argues, retained the essential Divine attributes of holiness, love and justice, but in the act of assuming human nature he "emptied" himself of those Divine attributes which concern his cosmic functions as the Eternal Word: omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience. Thus the Word himself becomes the true

<sup>1</sup> Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk*, § 40.



subject of the experience of Jesus with the full limitation, voluntarily admitted from the outset, of a human form of consciousness. In this way it is sought to do justice to those passages in the Gospels, always a difficulty for the traditional Christology, which ascribe growth, ignorance, human limitation to Jesus Christ himself. Thomasius allows that there is very little support for this view to be derived from the teaching of the Patristic Age, but he thinks that the history of doctrine as a whole may be shown to point in the direction of his doctrine, and in particular that the principle of *communicatio idiomatum*, on which Lutheran orthodoxy has always laid great stress, reaches here its full application, since the properties of the human nature which was assumed are now allowed to be so closely united with the properties of the Divine nature that the limitation of humanity actually conditioned the Divine nature of the Incarnate Christ.

In the hands of divines such as Thomasius, Dr Gore and Dr Mackintosh, a doctrine framed on these lines affords an impressive exposition of certain fundamental Christian thoughts. Full justice is done to the thought of the Divine condescension involved in the Incarnation: "He who was rich for our sakes became poor." Moreover, such a theory is far better adapted to deal with the real Figure of the Gospels, than the high a priori method championed by Dr Liddon. The objections to which it is, in some measure at least, exposed in all its different forms seem to be mainly two.

First, theologically the theory of a depotentiation of the Logos seems to carry quasi-mythological suggestions of a very doubtful character. How can it be supposed that the

Logos abandoned his cosmic functions for the episode of the Incarnation, as Thomasius, and following him Mackintosh, are prepared to suppose? This is the objection which is pressed home by Dr Temple in *Christus Veritas*. If on the other hand with Gore we shrink from the difficulties of this position and prefer to think that the Logos functions simultaneously as the omnipotent and omniscient sustainer of the universe and as the depotentiated Logos in Jesus Christ, we introduce a perilous dualism within the Second Person of the Trinity and to that extent we weaken our seeming gain in maintaining the Logos to be the centre of Our Lord's consciousness.

Then, secondly, if we approach the question now from the side of Our Lord's consciousness, the question presents itself how far continuity of Personality between himself and the Eternal Word is in truth affirmed, if we must postulate so vast a change in the Word at the Incarnation. Dr Rashdall has stated this difficulty with his accustomed vigour: "According to Bishop Gore," he wrote, "the Word up to the moment of the Incarnation knew everything—all history, all modern science, all the undiscovered science that there is to know, the whole course of future history, so far at least as it is known to God the Father,—but from the moment of the Incarnation He knew all this no more for some thirty-three years. Now it is surely a difficult doctrine to maintain that such a colossal loss of memory, such a profound change of intellectual outlook, such a complete breach of continuity in the consciousness of the Son, was consistent with what we commonly call personal identity....Cer-

tainly it is ridiculous to say that it is consistent with the Word being unchanged.”<sup>1</sup>

The main motive of Kenotic doctrine is, as we have already said, to secure belief in a Divine centre of consciousness for Jesus Christ. To this extent the doctrine, if it is at all possible, tends to preserve one fundamental element in the orthodox Christology. But it should be clearly realised that orthodoxy on this point is only secured—if indeed it is in truth secured even here—at the cost of a definite lapse into heterodoxy at another. For by the very terms of the theory the orthodox doctrine that the Divine nature was present in its integrity in the Incarnate Person is denied.<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christ on this theory may be “Very God”—though I think that Dr Rashdall’s doubts as to whether Athanasius would have allowed this are well founded—he is certainly not “Perfect God”.

Thomasius boldly contended that the underlying tendency of the history of Christology supported his view. In his important article *Kenosis*<sup>3</sup> Loofs has shown decisively that this claim cannot be sustained. Whether Kenotic doctrine be right or wrong, the orthodox doctrine both in the ancient Church and in the theology of the great Confessions has never countenanced the principle of a depotentiated Logos in the Incarnate Person.

<sup>1</sup> H. Rashdall, *God and Man*, pp. 95 f.

<sup>2</sup> The full Kenotic doctrine, as Mr Boys Smith has aptly remarked to me, is in effect identical with that change in the nature of the Word which St Cyril of Alexandria expressly disclaimed in the Dogmatic Epistle to Nestorius—a document which is of oecumenical authority: οὐ γάρ φαμεν, he there writes ὅτι ἡ τοῦ λόγου φύσις μεταποιηθεῖσα γέγονε σάρξ· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ ὅτι εἰς ὄλον ἀνθρώπων μετεβλήθη τὸν ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος.

<sup>3</sup> Herzog Hauck, *RE.* x, pp. 246–263.

Approaches to a genuine Kenotic doctrine are found in sectaries of the sixteenth and pietists of the eighteenth century, but according to orthodox doctrine the Divine attributes in the Incarnate Person, though they may be hidden or held in reserve, are always there.

We may agree with Mackintosh that Kenotic doctrine is not disproved because it may be shown to be inconsistent with conciliar orthodoxy. But the intrinsic difficulties remain and they are serious enough. Even if we judge them sufficient to warrant the verdict that theories of this type have failed, we may yet, with Loofs, recognise in them the desire to affirm an essential element in the Christian faith concerning Jesus Christ. "God was in Christ", says St Paul, "reconciling the world to himself." Neither here nor elsewhere does the Apostle give us any theory as to how God was in Christ, but his words suggest more than we can satisfy by a confession of Jesus Christ as a man uniquely inspired by God's Spirit. St Paul sets the Person of Christ directly in line with God's eternal purpose for mankind. And that seems necessary to a proper Christian faith. By their theory that Jesus Christ, albeit wholly conditioned by a human consciousness, was yet identically the Second Person in the Trinity, the Kenoticists sought to secure the eternal background for the Incarnation and the Cross.

Among the most vigorous of contemporary critics of Thomasius and his followers was the theologian and historian of doctrine, Dorner. Dorner will not for a moment countenance this modern Theopaschitism. He seeks to meet the difficulties of the position in another way. Error he thinks has arisen from the supposition that the Incar-

nation was so to speak complete from the start of Christ's life on earth. This false assumption makes it impossible to do justice to the Gospel sayings as to Our Lord's growth and genuinely human experience. He would have us think of the Incarnation as a developing relationship between the man Jesus and the Logos, in which the Man ever more fully appropriates the Eternal Word and the Eternal Word likewise ever more fully appropriates the Man. The Incarnation is not fully realised until the life is ended. In the background of his theory, which it must be confessed is rather obscure, is Dorner's doctrine that mankind itself is made in the image of the Logos, and, in spite of sin, retains the capacity of receiving the archetypal Word. Against the objection that his doctrine implies a quasi-Nestorian separation of the Word and the Man he seeks to maintain that though the union was not consummated until the end, yet at any given stage the Manhood was one with the Word so far as that stage allowed.

Brunner makes the acute criticism of the Kenotic theologians that they went astray through their preoccupation with the psychological approach to the Person of the Incarnate Lord. The psychological interest, he remarks, is not pronounced in the New Testament—though it is not entirely absent. The observation is just and the criticism may be extended to cover both the Kenoticists and Dorner. But so long as we try to state a doctrine in terms of One Divine Person in two natures it seems impossible to circumvent the psychological impasse. Brunner's own attempt at a distinction between Person and personality must be considered later.

The effort of the last hundred years has enabled us to appreciate anew the achievement of the great Christian theologians of the early centuries. Doctrine was made under the pressing necessity of taking up an attitude in face of specific tendencies of thought. In the main the answers which were given protected the Christian religion against disintegration. Not for one moment do we wish that the decision of Nicaea had been different. Even the Chalcedonian definition of the Incarnation, though it wrecked the unity of Christendom and bequeathed a legacy of distracting controversy to the Church, was not sheer calamity, for in the circumstances of the age it provided a certain safeguard to valuable elements in the tradition which powerful tendencies in dogma might otherwise have crushed. But our age is not theirs, and the doctrinal history of the last hundred years does not encourage the supposition that we can treat our problems in their terms.

## V

### THE FACT OF CHRIST

In an article contributed to the *Westminster Review* in the year 1857 on Theology in Germany, Mark Pattison makes an apt comparison between the Christologies which we last considered and the contemporary style of Church architecture: "The imitative Christology of the mediation school", he writes, "is like the imitative Gothic Churches rising all around us. They are copies after originals—they are no longer expressions in stone of the faith and sentiment of the builders."<sup>1</sup> In the survey which he makes of the prevailing schools in German theology of that date, and his classification of the theologians, Mark Pattison makes no mention of a young man who was already feeling his way toward a new position in theology, and who in the next thirty years was destined to change the face of theology throughout Europe. In the same year in which Mark Pattison wrote the article from which I have quoted, Albrecht Ritschl, known hitherto as a brilliant youthful disciple of the Tübingen leader F. C. Baur († 1860), published a second edition of a book on *The Rise of the Ancient Catholic Church*. The former edition, which had appeared when Ritschl was only twenty-eight years of age, had been written from the general standpoint of Tübingen; but this new edition construed the history of Primitive Christianity and the rise of the Catholic Church

<sup>1</sup> M. Pattison, *Essays* (ed. H. Nettleship, 1899), vol. II, p. 243.

from a quite fresh angle and thereby imparted a first impulse towards a new type of Christian theology. There was nothing imitative about Ritschl. He was "a voice"—at times a very harsh voice; but a voice which carried, and a voice which had a message for the age. The situation into which the youthful Ritschl stepped presents on the whole a depressing picture. A quarter of a century had elapsed since Hegel's death. After a period of almost unexampled dominance, the Hegelian schools had fallen from their high estate, and the great hopes of a religious and philosophical Renaissance had faded. On the left wing the Tübingen School of Theology, which had drawn inspiration from Hegel, though still counting among its members some of the most distinguished scholars of Germany, was past its prime; the leader's best work was done, and he was near his end. On the other wing was the aggressive school of high Lutheranism, theologically and intellectually negligible, but growing steadily more powerful in Church and State. In the centre was an amorphous collection of teachers, seeking in various ways to effect a *modus vivendi* between thought and Churchmanship. Within this central group of "mediating" theologians were to be found men of great and even of outstanding ability, such as Rothe, but as was to be expected there was little cohesion. Cohesion must always be lacking among those whose principle it is, unconscious or avowed, to establish an equilibrium. Echoes of Schleiermacher and of Hegel mingle with the revived Confessionalism; but the voices of the masters were stilled; they had left disciples, not successors. Into this uneasy scene of rather fruitless activity Ritschl's teaching



came with a tonic effect. He succeeded in achieving a defined conception of the nature of the Christian religion, and of its proper relations with philosophy, history and science, and his theology was no mere theory of the schools, but calculated to supply principles for the faith and life of the Christian Society. For the next generation Ritschl became the focus of a new school which, though fiercely criticised and even hated, drew to itself the strongest minds, and provided fresh motives for historical research and for constructive thought and new inspiration for Christian living.

In certain fundamental respects we may regard Ritschl as taking up again the work of Schleiermacher. Like Schleiermacher he finds his starting-point in the Christian Church, the fellowship of believers, historically derived from and actually dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, Ritschl emphasises the Church even more strongly than Schleiermacher had done. Schleiermacher had represented it as the distinction between the Catholic and Protestant conceptions of Christianity, that Protestantism makes the individual's relation to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ, whereas the Catholic conception of Christianity makes the individual's relation to Christ dependent on his relation to the Church.<sup>1</sup> Ritschl draws the distinction otherwise. For Catholics and Protestants alike there is, in his view, no true relationship to Christ, except so far as it is mediated by the Church. Only as a member of the Church is the faithful Christian justified before God. The true distinction between Protestantism and Catholicism, for Ritschl, does not lie in the relative

<sup>1</sup> F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, § 24, English trans. p. 103.

exaltation or the relative depreciation of the individual's relation to the Church, but in their differing conceptions of the Church itself: for Catholics the Church is a legal corporation, governed by officers who rule by Divine Right; whereas for Protestants, the Church, instead of being conceived in terms of Law, is the fellowship of the faithful, who, through their union with Christ, are sharers in his victory over the world. We might perhaps describe Ritschl as an anti-clerical High Churchman. Again for Ritschl as for Schleiermacher, Christianity is a positive, historical faith, dependent for its quality and character upon the historical figure in which it originated. And with these similarities there goes a fundamentally similar conception of the function of Theology. Schleiermacher teaches in terms of Redemption, whereas Ritschl works with the category of Justification, but both alike conceive it to be the task of Theology to treat scientifically and systematically the religious relationship which is implied in the existence of the Christian Society.

But with these broad similarities between the positions of the two men the likeness ends. The masculine vigour and concentration of Ritschl's character contrast with the imaginative and more subtle mind of his great predecessor. And Ritschl in the mid-nineteenth century was dealing with another world. The key to his positive position is given us in his breach with the Tübingen School of F. C. Baur, which, as we have already seen, had first engaged his enthusiastic loyalty. He had learned in a Hegelian School to form a comprehensive conception of the movement of Christian history, and this lesson he never forgot. But he became increasingly conscious that

the attempt to construe history on Hegelian principles as the dialectical movement of Spirit in general, entailed a blindness to the actual concrete world of striving humanity which history, at any given stage, reveals. History was indeed a process, but because it was constituted by the struggles and interactions of the generations of conscious, willing men, who in some measure at least achieved victory over the forces in which they lived, it could never be adequately interpreted in terms of process. Ritschl does not himself develop a philosophy of history, but such thoughts as these are latent in his book on *The Rise of the Ancient Catholic Church*. No doubt, he was influenced by the spirit of the age, as he in turn contributed to the formation of that spirit. We are in the period of Ranke's revolt from Hegel. "Logically", wrote Ranke of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, "the theory can only lead to Pantheism. Mankind is the growing god who procreates himself through a spiritual process immanent in his own nature." As against Hegel, Ranke had insisted that each age has intrinsic value for itself, and stands directly related to God. History is "the scene of new and unique facts, unrepeatable events springing daily from the Creator's Hand". In a somewhat similar spirit, Ritschl protests against a system which would subsume the Christian faith under the general notion of a dialectical movement of the Spirit. Christianity, as he sees it, is a mighty force with individual character existing in its own right. It is the Kingdom of God wherein, through the course of history, believers, each in his own vocation, have been made sharers in that reconciliation to God's purpose, and that victory over the world which Jesus Christ brought about through his utter

loyalty to the calling of God, when God called him to be Founder of the Kingdom of God among men. If Schleiermacher construed religion in terms of feeling, and Hegel in terms of reason, Ritschl's interpretation was in terms of will.

Ritschl confesses the Divinity of Jesus Christ. "By what He has done", he writes, "and suffered for my salvation Christ is my Lord, and by trusting for my salvation to the power of what He has done for me, I honour Him as my God." It will be noticed in this characteristic affirmation that Ritschl links his confession of the Deity of Christ with his trust in Christ's saving power. Only when this connexion is made will Ritschl allow that the doctrine conveys meaning. Accordingly he speaks of this confession of Jesus as a "value-judgment" and distinguishes it from such a statement as the Chalcedonian Definition, which purports to belong to the sphere of disinterested scientific knowledge.

Now Ritschl's principle that Jesus Christ has the value of God is sometimes supposed to imply that for those who adopt it, Christ is not in truth, though he may be taken to be in practice, Divine. The supposition mistakes Ritschl's meaning, for he does not accept the antithesis. Beginning with a strong *præjudicium* against the attempt whether made by Hegelians or by scholastics to subsume religious belief under the heading of metaphysics, he defends the independent status of religion. In scientific observation and judgment, the character and personal reaction of the observer are considerations irrelevant to a valid judgment. But religious judgments can never be of this character. They too relate to a real world, and they claim a universal

validity, but it is a world which is known to us, and only known to us, through the activity of the will. Ritschl cites and uses in its full extent the text "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (Jo. vii. 17). Ritschl presupposes the Kantian distinction between the Realm of Nature and the Realm of Ends. But he is more historical in his thinking than Kant. Kant had been ready to use the great phrases of the Creed: "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made" of that moral Law which man, as a denizen of the Realm of Ends, apprehends. Kant had also spoken with profound reverence for the Person of Jesus Christ, who, for him, is the adequate symbol and representative of the moral Law. But the place Kant assigns to the Person of Jesus Christ is that of a sufficient symbol. For Ritschl, on the other hand, the identity of Person and principle is of central importance. Jesus Christ is the Founder of the Kingdom of God in history. The victory of faith was won by him, and is imparted derivatively to the Christian community. For the community which worships him as Lord, Christ has the value of God.

Here we must bear in mind a highly significant change which was taking place during the early years of Ritschl's career in the scholarly and scientific study of the New Testament, a change to which Ritschl himself made no small contribution. New Testament criticism last claimed our attention in connexion with Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and his application of the theory of myth to the Gospel texts. Strauss's book, so far as history was concerned, had been mainly negative in its conclusions, and did little to pro-

mote a fresh constructive interpretation of the texts. This weakness Baur had sought to remedy. He was much influenced by Strauss's work, but he made it his aim to discover the originating motives which had inspired the authors of the different Gospels, and to interpret the Gospels as representative of the various movements which, in his view, had contributed to the growth of the Christian religion. This is not the place to recall the reasons which led him to date all the Canonical Gospels within the second Christian century. We are here concerned only to note the inevitable result that, on this view, the possible value of the Gospels as sources for the life of the Jesus of history was relatively slight, however important they might be for the development of the Christian idea. The general collapse of Baur's speculative reconstruction, under closer critical examination, entirely changed the situation from within. It is not too much to say that at this period, about the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a re-discovery of the New Testament. Critical opinion did not revert to the pre-Strauss, pre-Tübingen position. St John's Gospel in particular, from the time of Strauss onwards, continued to be a focus of critical debate. Opinions differed, but the confident dependence on St John which Schleiermacher had shown was no longer usual. Ritschl, we may notice, in the second edition of his *Rise of the Ancient Catholic Church*, accepted its authenticity, though he makes but little use of it for his immediate purpose. The Synoptic Gospels are now thrown back into the first century and to dates not far distant from those to which Church tradition assigned them. Ritschl has come to accept the priority of Mark, and he makes that

Gospel his primary source when he enquires into the attitude of Jesus towards the Mosaic Law.

More important than any particular critical conclusion is Ritschl's new-found conviction that he is in possession of a criterion for distinguishing the attitude of the Apostolic age from that of the succeeding period: genuine Apostolic writings are all written against a background of Judaism and the Jewish Law, whereas the later legalism of the Christian Church is a fresh growth on the soil of Gentile Christianity, not a continuation of Judaizing influences. As a consequence, Ritschl is able once more to use the New Testament conscientiously as a standard for original Christianity and, as he believes, to distinguish Apostolic Christianity from later developments. Ritschl played a part in German Biblical Scholarship, which may be compared with that of the contemporary Cambridge School, Westcott, Lightfoot and Hort, in this country. After the exaggerated historical scepticism of the middle decades of the century Lightfoot in England and Ritschl in Germany restored confidence in the New Testament and thus prepared the way for a new type of historical Biblical theology.

This new-found confidence lies behind Ritschl's interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ which we must now scrutinise more closely.<sup>1</sup> The essential note of the Christian faith as Ritschl understands it may be given in one

<sup>1</sup> In this account of Ritschl's doctrine of the Person of Christ I depend mainly upon the third volume of his great dogmatic treatise *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (1870-74; English translation of vol. III, 'The positive developement of the doctrine', ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay, Edinburgh, 1900), especially ch. VI, §§ 44-50.

phrase: "Lordship over the world." And this Lordship over the world is bound up with what Jesus Christ, in the fulfilment of his unique vocation, actually achieved. There is, says Ritschl, no parallel in any other religion to the position which Jesus Christ holds in the Christian religion for the society of Christians. The Deity of Jesus, only to be recognised from within the Church, consists in just this Lordship over the world. Jesus was called to be the Christ: that is, he was called, as kingly prophet, to realise for himself and to reveal to others God's ethical Lordship. The purpose of Jesus Christ, fully realised in life and death, was identical in content with the purpose of God for mankind. Ritschl definitely breaks with dogmatic tradition in refusing to look for the Divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence in the Person who is Jesus Christ. Thus far there is close resemblance between Ritschl and the Kenoticists. Those attributes concern the Divine relation to the world, and they cannot be found in Jesus Christ, who, as an individual, is himself a part of that world. The Gospel miracles, which might be taken as evidence of a character superhuman in this respect, do not in fact, Ritschl maintains, lend themselves to exact scientific treatment, and therefore cannot, of themselves, be made to support such a conclusion. Again, he makes the criticism of the orthodox Christology that it is unable to allow for what the Gospels themselves plainly indicate: namely, that Jesus Christ himself was subject of the religious attitude to the Father. In Ritschl's view it is his complete exemplification of this attitude which makes him the complete revealer of God, so that for



those who believe on him, he has the value of God. The Deity was revealed not hidden in the earthly life. This is the ground of fundamental criticism of Kenotic doctrine. If, as Kenotic doctrine teaches, the Word divested himself of essential qualities of Deity in order to be Incarnate, then, says Ritschl, we are to that extent prohibited from recognising essential qualities of Deity in the earthly life, and that life itself is emptied of its meaning. If Deity is not to be found *in the earthly life*, it is relegated to a speculative background, and loses vital meaning for the Church. Greek theology, Ritschl urges, whatever its defects in other respects, had seized the connexion between the Deity of Christ and the salvation of men. "He [the Divine Word] became man that we [men] might be made Divine." So, too, for Ritschl, the doctrine of Christ's Deity must be understood in the light of what it achieves.

Ritschl refuses seriously to concern himself with the speculative background of the life of Christ. Language which speaks of an eternal relation between the Father and the Son is misused when it is made to support the idea of a personal pre-existence of Jesus Christ. In such connexions Jesus Christ as historic person, and he alone, should fill our thoughts. The affirmation of an Eternal relationship between the Father and the Son means that Jesus was from Eternity fore-ordained by God to hold supremacy over the world as the Head of humanity redeemed. Living as we do in the temporal order we are inevitably confronted by an insoluble antithesis between God's eternal decree and its realisation in the empirical world of time. The Eternal Godhead of the Son can only be intelligible for God Himself. The notion of Christ's

pre-existence is necessarily obscure, but we may say that if in the case of God we discount the interval between purpose and accomplishment, we may then say that Christ exists for God eternally as that which he appears to us under the limitations of time. "Inasmuch as God's standpoint is impossible for us", Ritschl characteristically concludes, "we shall be wise if we content ourselves with this formal proof of our religious estimate of Christ." Ritschl labours hard to show that New Testament texts which ascribe a cosmic function to the Son, or the Word, are properly to be understood of the final end of creation, not of an original agency in creation. We may take his exegesis of the opening verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews as representative. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things." That, for Ritschl, is the fundamental thought: the lowly Son is the destined Heir of the world; and when we go on to the next clause—"Through whom also, he made the worlds"—we must still carry it in mind. We must supply τοῦ τεθέντος κληρονόμου πάντων to explain δι' οὗ; that is to say, "through Christ as the appointed Heir of all things, the worlds themselves have come to be". Here, as often, Ritschl exaggerates, but he exaggerates a truth. He is right when he insists that the passage starts out from God's speaking with men in Jesus Christ his Son, and that the exaltation of this Son to be heir of all things is the writer's first thought; but he exaggerates when he makes the writer assert the cosmic aspect solely as an explication of the prior thought. The writer to the Hebrews was a

master of Greek, and had he intended this deliberate limitation of meaning, he was quite capable of making his intention plain. He might have subordinated, but in fact he co-ordinates.

We find then these three elements combining in Ritschl's Theology as a whole and most clearly in his doctrine of the Christ. In the first place he is metaphysically agnostic. Disillusioned like others of his generation with Hegel's Idealism he distrusts the capacity of human reason to attain to God. An alliance between Theology and Metaphysics is a fundamental mistake. Theology is not amenable to the jurisdiction of the philosopher. The Gospel stands on its own feet—"the power of God unto salvation". This philosophical agnosticism is balanced by an historical positivism. The ways of God, to which man can never attain by the exercise of thought, may yet be known by prophetic insight into the moral order. Supreme among the prophets, and greater than any prophet, is the central Figure of the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, God's Son. In the face of Jesus Christ God is revealed to man. And thirdly, Ritschl's doctrine is essentially a Churchly doctrine. This is not to say that Ritschl is disposed to exalt the element of ecclesiastical authority. On the contrary he has a profound distrust of the worldly aims of ecclesiastics, and regards ecclesiastical machinery as a mere worldly necessity without religious significance. All the greater is his emphasis upon the evangelical conception of the Church as the fellowship of believers. Ritschl claims to present to his time the true principles of Luther and the Reformation, and feels himself called to bring the evangelical Church of Germany

behind the Illumination and behind the Scholasticism of Protestantism to its own first principles. These three elements combined in Ritschl's mind to produce a strong and harmonious structure of systematic Theology which exercised a commanding influence for more than a generation and is something more than a memory to-day.

In our own country there has been no true counterpart to Ritschl. In the later nineteenth century his system was studied extensively, and in earlier decades we trace similar tendencies and some direct knowledge of Ritschl in our theological literature. Both Hort and Lightfoot knew and valued Ritschl's work on Church History, and, as we have seen, the Cambridge School did a work for British New Testament scholarship comparable with, and in some ways superior to, Ritschl's work in Germany. But systematic theology, such as Ritschl produced, has never flourished on English soil. When we find the same or similar tendencies in England they wear a lay and unprofessional form as in Sir John Seeley's *Ecce Homo*. In spite of the difference in form there are real affinities: the same bold central appeal to the Christ of the Gospels; the same interpretation of religion in terms of will; a similar indifference to dogmatic tradition; and the same emphasis on the Christian Society. The element in Ritschl which is characteristically absent from Sir John Seeley, as it is from most English writers, is the persistent desire to assert a claim to interpret the true meaning of Reformation theology. A German Protestant writer, of whatever school, is never content until he has established his true affinity with the mind of the great Reformer. But Luther was a German. Our own chief leaders of the

Reformation era were of a different type and they have not imposed their personalities upon posterity.

To each age its own problems. In different ages men have arisen who have so handled the forces of their time that they have been able to create a living synthesis which has not only satisfied the requirements of their own time, but, when the ever-operative law of change has swept away the conditions which gave it birth, still remains a classic expression of a type of faith from which succeeding generations may learn. A classical position of this kind belongs to Ritschl. Though the conditions of thought, of scholarship and of Church life have been transformed he is still worth reading. Thus I cannot resist the impression that in his reading of the Gospels Ritschl saw and firmly grasped something that is really there, though it is now the fashion in some quarters to ignore it, or at the least not to emphasise it. Ritschl would not be put off by what he scornfully derides as a "mere claim upon the future". The assertion of Christ's supremacy over the world must find its criterion in the historical figure presented by his life.<sup>1</sup> Reading again §49 of the third volume of *Justification and Reconciliation* I am impressed by the strength of Ritschl's delineation of the historic Jesus in his relations with home and kindred, with nation and rulers, with sinners and the new-found family of disciples. As a whole Ritschl's picture is impossible for us because of his unconscious modernising of the idea of the Kingdom of God. But if Ritschl distorts the perspective of the New Testament in one direction when he tries to derive all that is significant from the historic fact of Christ, it is a

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* English trans. pp. 406, 456.

not less serious distortion if the primitive expectation of the coming Kingdom with Jesus as God's vice-gerent is allowed virtually to suppress the historic figure of him who did really live and teach and die. The tendency to depreciate the mere personality of Jesus as the 'incognito' of his Divinity<sup>1</sup> may very easily result in a Theology which because it has lost its foothold in fact and history is in danger of losing the criterion for its faith. Ritschl saw a truth which some moderns miss.

To trace the dissolution of Ritschlianism and kindred types of doctrine would involve writing the history of Theology from about the year 1890 until the years immediately subsequent to the Great War. The forces which broke up that synthesis of historical scholarship, Theology and Churchmanship, are living in us now and make the situation with which we have to deal. Ritschl had made his appeal to history and had grounded himself upon the Christian religion as a positive historic force. The Kingdom of God was his ruling idea. To be a Christian was to accept the Kingdom of God which Jesus had preached and founded among men and thereby to attain a spiritual lordship over the world. To a reader of our generation it cannot fail to be astonishing with what *naïveté* Ritschl identifies this concept of the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of God as we read of it in the Gospels. He seems never to have questioned the assumption that the Jesus of history had consciously willed an historical and enduring community in this our world which should share in the Lordship which he could give. The Apostles, he recognises, had been looking for a near return of Jesus and for a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Brunner, *The Mediator*, p. 265 *et passim*.

Kingdom to be revealed from heaven, but he considers that in this respect they held a view quite different from that of Jesus himself, for whom the Kingdom was ever a present state inaugurated by his words and his life. A stricter scrutiny was to put this unconscious assumption to the test and in so doing to strain the whole fabric of the Ritschlian synthesis. In Johannes Weiss's *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (first edition, 1892) we see the process of disintegration at work. This remarkable little book—or rather pamphlet—sprang, so its author later related, from a conflict in its author's soul. Like most of the leading German Protestant scholars of his age, Johannes Weiss stood in the tradition which Ritschl had established. Ritschl had sent him to the Jesus of history, and in that figure he could find much that Ritschl had taught him to see. But he could not with a good conscience refuse to see that the ruling category of the Kingdom of God meant one thing in Ritschl's thinking and another in the Gospel texts. That which had been a coherent system of faith cohered no more. Johannes Weiss is left with a divided mind. In the Preface to the second revised and enlarged edition (1900) he writes that he is still of the opinion that Ritschl's type of systematic teaching is the appropriate form for the exposition of Christianity to the mind of the age, but scholarly integrity compelled the admission that the Jesus of history had thought and meant something else. Others were found to press home the conclusion Weiss had drawn. Among them we note the Roman Catholic Modernists, Loisy and Tyrrell, who in their onslaught on Liberal Protestantism served themselves of Weiss's work. Systematic theology and scholarly criti-

cism, which hitherto had appeared to reinforce one another, now began to follow different paths. They were not necessarily hostile: if the systematic theologian was able to pick up some useful materials from the scholar's workshop, he was at liberty to do so; but the scholar asserted, as he was bound to do, the right and the duty to follow out his quest undeterred by doctrinal consequences, while the systematic theologian too often found himself in a state of uneasy equilibrium between the claims of a secularised scholarship and the religious requirements of the age.

Nor was it only from within that Ritschlianism showed signs of strain. Ritschl founded himself on the New Testament. Other religions in his eyes did not really count. But as time went on the penalty of this isolation had to be paid. The Bible itself, historically viewed, is linked historically with the wider story of the religion of mankind. There are other faiths in the story of the race, and some of them in some measure at least have influenced the faith of the Bible. On what principle can the isolation of the Bible be maintained if the dogmatic idea of the inspired Canon is no longer defended? Under the pressure of these questions the study of the Bible tended to pass over into the wider study of the religious history of mankind, and the Christian religion once more, though in a new fashion, incurred the peril of absorption within the process of history.

Adolph Harnack, the most learned theologian of his day, best illustrates the crisis of the closing years of the last century. Of course he admitted the Apocalyptic element in the Gospels, but he argued that for those who



knew what was essential in religion, it was merely the unimportant form of a significant idea. A similar reserve marked his attitude to the new school of the historical study of religion. He did not take it quite seriously. Theologically it was in danger of *dilettante* dabbling, which the Christian theologian, with the historical foundation of the Bible to build upon, should eschew. Harnack was much reproached by the younger generation at the beginning of this century. Truth to tell he dealt shrewd blows at rash theorists. But the real secret of Harnack's attitude is that he remained fundamentally Ritschlian to the last. To some he seemed to grow narrow. From another point of view it might be argued that his hesitation sprang from the breadth of his view. Theology, as Harnack conceived it, should be synthetic—based on history, but adapted for use by human faith. A religion which could not base itself upon an historic figure was at the mercy of subjective caprice, while on the other hand an historical study of religion which had no eye for religious values was lacking in seriousness.

But in truth the balance of forces which sustained the Ritschlian synthesis was more gravely disturbed than Harnack had allowed for. The law of life demanded transformation. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Learning, Theology, Churchmanship cannot remain indefinitely dissociated without injury to each member of the triad, but the relations between them must grow out of the actual situation. Ritschl's doctrine had been influential because in the mid-nineteenth century he had attacked this problem vigorously

and sincerely and had succeeded in formulating principles which in the then existing state of thought did more justice than the views of his antagonists to the real issues. Looking back now upon the last two decades before the Great War it is not difficult to see that conditions in Theology, Philosophy and Church Life were already in process of change. Later events have accelerated tendencies which were already then at work. Now we find ourselves round a headland with a new prospect ahead of us. To affirm the doctrine of Christ's Divinity to-day cannot mean the same to us that it did to Coleridge or to Liddon or to Sir John Seeley or to Bishop Gore. We have still to consider the doctrine in the setting of the contemporary world.

## VI

### *THE PROBLEM OF REVELATION*

As we saw at the outset, the nineteenth century was obliged to face questions as to the nature and identity of the Christian religion which no preceding Christian century had even conceived. Had any Christian of any Church between the end of the second century and the closing decades of the eighteenth been asked a question as to the content of the Christian religion, his answer could scarcely have failed to be to the general effect that the truths of the Christian religion were contained and conveyed in the inspired books of Holy Scripture, and if further questioned he would not have felt himself at liberty to dispute that everything in the Holy Scriptures formed part of the Divine Revelation. The inspired Scriptures were committed to but they were in no sense created by the Church. While a Catholic would hold it necessary to secure the Church's aid to interpret the Scriptures aright, he held, not less firmly than the Protestant, that the Scriptures came, not from man, not from the Church, but from God. Man wrote them, but God, who inspired them, was the true author of their existence.

With the single exception of Liddon, who represents for us the orthodox reaction of the nineteenth century, no one of the divines whom we have been considering—and our selection has included representatives of all the important tendencies of the last century—accepts this view of the Christian religion. They are agreed in treating the Bible

historically, not dogmatically. For these theologians the Bible is dogmatically significant, inasmuch as it contains the record of the historical figures, above all the central Figure Jesus Christ, who give to the Christian religion its distinctive character, but it is not, in itself, decisive. Portions of its contents may be historically and scientifically erroneous—they may even be religiously misleading. This change in attitude towards the Bible goes with a new positive conception of the Christian religion: for all these teachers the truth and content of the Christian religion are bound up with the Christian Church, however the Christian Church may itself be conceived or defined. The Church for the divines of the nineteenth century is not so much the depository and guardian of a Revelation committed to it, as the continuous historical embodiment of the religion itself, while Christian theology becomes the orderly explication of that relation between man and God which is involved in the existence of the Christian Church. A change in terminology corresponding to this change of attitude may be observed. In the nineteenth century it becomes less usual than it had been to speak of Christianity as “Revealed Religion”, and commoner to speak of it as “a historical religion” or “the Historic Faith”. Such phrases, with whatever differences of emphasis or interpretation, find a natural place in all the main types of doctrine which we have been considering, whereas for all of them—except the orthodox reaction represented by Liddon—the concept of Revelation, formerly clear cut, has become blurred.

The change was gradual. Defenders of Revelation in the strict sense fought a long rear-guard action, and others

too who were no mere maintainers of tradition made forcible criticism of the new view. "The speculative thinker", wrote Kierkegaard in 1846, with the reigning Hegelianism in his mind, "the speculative thinker treats Christianity as a historical phenomenon. But what if it is no such thing? 'What?' the objector asks, 'In these days when speculation has grasped the necessity of the historical?'...[The objector forgets] that the invisible Church, unlike the visible Church, is *not* a historical phenomenon, and that the invisible Church is Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Kierkegaard too is prepared to identify Christianity with the Church, but he means the Church as the totality of believers redeemed from the temporal and the historical into the transcendent, superhistorical Kingdom of the beyond. Kierkegaard's influence was to reach its height in a future then distant. Ritschl, not he, led the theological revolt from Hegel in the late nineteenth century, and for Ritschl such a phrase as "Christianity an historical religion" is in place, since he makes the believing Church in this temporal historical world the starting-point of his system.

It is not to be overlooked that these two views of Christianity, which we may distinguish from each other by the phrases "The Revealed Religion" and "The Historic Faith", have a factor in common which is essential to each: in the one case as in the other the Christian religion includes—nay it rests upon—certain historical figures and certain historical events which form a part of the general history of mankind. But the relation of

<sup>1</sup> S. A. Kierkegaard, *Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift. Werke*, vol. VI, p. 143.

Christianity to the general history of mankind is very different, according as Christianity is "The Revealed Religion" or "The Historic Faith", and a clear perception of the nature of this difference is one essential condition for a treatment of the problem of Revelation which is to be valid for our own time.

In his study of *The Idea of Progress* Professor Bury has stated with characteristic lucidity the part which the Christian religion has played in developing the historical sense of western civilisation. The Graeco-Roman world was not familiar with the thought of history as a unique process with a meaning and a purpose. In so far as the ancients thought about the matter at all, they were inclined to think of history as a series of recurrent cycles:

Another Typhis shall new Seas explore,  
Another Argos land the chiefs upon th' Iberian shore,  
Another Helen other Wars create,  
And great Achilles urge the Trojan Fate.<sup>1</sup>

It was Christianity which destroyed this view. All converts to the early Church were put in possession of an authoritative account of the history of mankind viewed as a single whole within a theological framework; and while the acceptance of the "revealed" Biblical scheme was, no doubt, responsible, as Professor Bury points out, for some cramping and distorting of historical knowledge and historical perspective, none the less it was a momentous achievement when, in Professor Bury's words, "Christian Theology constructed a synthesis which for the first time attempted to give a definite meaning to the whole course

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, the fourth eclogue (as rendered by Dryden).

of human events".<sup>1</sup> The meaning centred upon the historical person Jesus of Nazareth, his life, death, resurrection and expected advent. This cannot be over-emphasised. But the new attitude towards history which the Christian Church achieved did not result solely from its belief in a historical Incarnation: it issued from the whole complex of ideas inherited from the parent faith, which the Church combined with the new elements distinctive of its own belief. The outlook of Christianised Europe upon the history of mankind depended upon Genesis and Daniel quite as much as it did upon the Gospels. The whole Bible constituted the Divine Revelation entrusted to the Church, and Tertullian could proudly boast that, while history as known to pagans did not reach beyond the Empire of the Assyrians, "we, who read divine histories, are masters of the subject from the birthday of the universe itself".<sup>2</sup> The Bible fostered a habit of looking at the whole process of events in time as subservient to a Divine purpose, with the Creation to open and the Last Judgment to close the story.

When the nineteenth century spoke of Christianity as "the Historic Faith" it tended to lay the emphasis otherwise. What had once been to the Church an asset of incalculable value had by this time turned into a grave liability. The world of nature and the world of events refused to keep within the framework which the Bible had provided. From the time of the Deists doubt had been cast upon the credentials of "Revealed Religion", and

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> "Qui vero divinas [historias] lectitamus, ab ipsius mundi natalibus compotes sumus." *De Pallio*, 2.

now, with its resistance weakened, the whole edifice seemed like to melt away. But instead of melting away, Christianity changed its form. "The Revealed Religion" became "the Historic Faith", and Christianity was viewed with freshly quickened interest and renewed reverence as a spiritual movement in the sphere of history, originating with a historical person and enduring in the life of a historical society. To a generation which still felt the pressure of a traditional system discordant with the knowledge of the age, this conception of Christianity came with the force of a new revelation. The books of Scripture were seen to be not merely pictures of a discredited world view, but literary monuments of great religious personalities—men who, though they had shared in the limitations of their time, embodied values for religion which stood out above and beyond these limitations, so that when studied with the aids of scholarship they still afforded to mankind a foundation for a spiritual faith. These personalities take their place as the fine flowering of the growth which is "history of religion". The Bible may be treated as a text-book for the study of this organic growth. Starting from humble beginnings in the crude beliefs and practices of a Semitic people, the religion of Israel issues in the faith of the Prophets of the Old Testament and of the Apostles of the New. The devout student can trace in the process a development of the Divine purpose for mankind or—in Lessing's terminology—"the education of the human race." The process may be described in terms of Revelation, but then it must be recognised to be a "progressive Revelation", for the earlier stages contain much which in the light of later



stages, as Revelation becomes clearer, must be disregarded or even repudiated: primitive rites give way before the ethical teaching of the prophets, and the prophetic teaching in its turn is taken up and consummated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With the new insight thus attained by the application of historical science to the Bible Christian teachers in the nineteenth century were enabled to meet many difficulties which were inextricably involved in the traditional system, and so long as the older conception of the plenary inspiration of the Bible remained in possession of a large part of the field, it continued to be felt as a liberating idea. But the victory of the new outlook on the Bible has changed the situation once again: we are now less conscious of the advantages of the historical view of the Bible as compared with the old dogmatic view—the old being largely forgotten—while at the same time problems for religion and for theology which are inherent in the more recent view have become increasingly urgent. If religion in the whole extent of its history is to be thought of as in some measure at least Revelation—and on what grounds of principle can we refuse to entertain this supposition, if the Bible forfeits its exclusive claim to be the book dictated by God?—the position of the Christian religion in relation to the history of the race is certainly something very different from what traditional theology has supposed it to be, and the questions are at least raised whether Christianity as a distinct type is likely to be able to maintain its identity and whether it can assert a reasoned claim to universality.

No thinker of recent times has handled these problems with greater candour or profounder learning than Ernst

Troeltsch and his thought, particularly in its later phases, illustrates the gravity of the issues which are involved. A deep student of history, courageously facing the issues of a historic faith amid the manifold and changing forms of religion in world-history past and present, Troeltsch finds himself in the last resort unable to affirm the universality of the Christian religion, or to entertain the belief that it is called to be the religion of mankind. As in the case of most German thinkers of modern times, Troeltsch's thought depends upon the Romantic conception of individuality and especially in the sphere of religion does he find this conception dominant. Christianity is the religion—the only religion—of our western world and this for him constitutes its claim upon the allegiance of those who live within the range of European and American civilisation. "The primary claim of Christianity to validity", he writes in one of his later lectures,<sup>1</sup> "is the fact that only through it have we become what we are, and that only in it can we preserve the religious forces that we need." It is a *de facto* claim, and similar claims must be allowed to other faiths; for the claim to universal validity for Christianity based upon the belief that Christianity alone is a direct Revelation from on high cannot be sustained. Nor is Troeltsch willing to allow us to look upon Christianity as universally adequate, or to think of it, in the manner of many of his Romanticist predecessors, as the crown of the religious development of the race. "The universal law of history", he writes, "consists precisely in this, that the Divine Reason, or the Divine Life, within history,

<sup>1</sup> E. Troeltsch, *Christian Thought* (English trans.), § 1, "Christianity among the world religions", p. 25.

constantly manifests itself in always new, and always peculiar individualisations—and hence that its tendency is not towards unity or universality at all, but rather towards the fulfilment of the highest potentialities of each separate department of life. It is this law, which, beyond all else, makes it quite impossible to characterise Christianity as the reconciliation and goal of all the forces of history, or indeed to regard it as anything else than an historical individuality.”<sup>1</sup>

Now such doctrine may serve to warn us against delusive hopes of some hasty synthesis of diverse religions, or of a spectacular victory of the Christian religion over other faiths, but as a statement of principle it appears to be open to grave objection, both in itself and as a possible interpretation for Christians of the rôle of their religion in the world.

The claim of Christianity to be a religion for all nations is no mere matter of texts. The conviction that in Christ a redemption has been achieved which is of import to the race is inwoven with the whole texture of Christian thought. To detach it would be to mar the pattern of Christian thinking. And if the Christian Gospel is, for the Christian consciousness, of import for the race, an irresistible logic demands that it should be preached and taught to all mankind. It is one thing to allow for the slow movements of history, and to school our minds to look beyond the pale of Christendom for the manifold workings of a Divine Reason; it is another to surrender the conviction that a people which has not learnt the faith of Christ crucified has missed the final clue to God’s

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14.

dealings with mankind. Christian theology need not claim that the Christian religion contains within itself all truth, or even all truth that is of religious value, but if it loses the conviction that in Christ it has found the deepest truth of God, it has lost itself. From the position of a critical observer we must leave open the possibility that Christians will lose this conviction and ought to do so. But that is not here the point. We are only concerned here to maintain that the Christian Church is, by the very nature of its being, compelled to measure itself with the rivals it may encounter. If in principle it declines the challenge, then in principle it has abandoned the attitude of Christian faith. This means that while we may agree with Troeltsch that Christianity is "a historical individuality", we cannot as Christians concur with the judgment that it is "not anything else".

And for more general reasons it is undesirable that we should do so. For if it be true—and it is—that history shows us the human family organised in varied distinctive forms of social, political and religious life, yet it is also true that the movement of history and the creation of fresh types spring from the interaction of these historical individualities. That which starts as an historical individuality must face the test of contact with a wider environment. Such contact will show whether or not the historical individuality has strength to maintain a claim to universal validity. Interaction is possible because there are factors common to all human types of culture and religion. However different they may be, they are yet comparable. An alien culture or a foreign religion which influences us will act upon us because it is not merely

alien, but is capable of stimulating and satisfying apprehensions and needs which are already latent in our mental, spiritual and social organisation. In the very act of comparing faith with faith, and judging, as we may be compelled to judge, their respective adequacy as interpretations of the ends of life and as means for their attainment, we have already assumed the existence of a criterion by which we judge. The truth of this is not disproved by the recognition that the standards actually adopted by different individuals and groups will vary indefinitely, and that it is to be expected that these standards will themselves be modified in the light of wider experience. Indeed it is this very circumstance which disinclines us to acquiesce in the principle of individuality as ultimate. It is a true, but a subordinate principle. If it is allowed to reign unchecked it involves an ultimate scepticism as to the true ends of life. If after all there is a better and a truer faith than Christianity as to the ultimate meaning and purpose of the world, it is to be desired that Christians should learn it and adopt it in place of the belief which they have inherited.

It is said that in contemporary Germany Troeltsch is no longer read. His broad historical vision is not congenial to the reigning ideology and his theological position seems too ill-defined to afford a sure foothold to the would-be defenders of the Christian tradition. It is certainly intelligible that a Theology such as his with inadequacies so grave when judged by the internal requirements of the Christian consciousness should encourage attempts to reassert the old conception of Christianity as the "Revealed Religion" in an exclusive sense.

Such attempts are now widespread in those circles which remain within the scope of the direct influence of the Christian Churches and they attract attention from sympathetic observers without. Roman Catholic intransigence which was a stumbling block to the intelligence of the nineteenth century has now become in the eyes of certain literary groups a positive recommendation. For Scholasticism, whether in its original form or as modified by teachers of our own time, the concept of Revelation as the supernatural and infallible communication of propositional truths is indispensable. It is not mere perversity or obscurantism but the inexorable requirement of a mighty system which leads Roman Catholic Theology to assert in all its rigour the plenary inspiration of the Books of Holy Scripture. Thomism lays a broad foundation of Natural Theology to support the superstructure of Revealed Truth, but its most distinctive feature is the clear line which it draws between the two. Christianity and Christianity alone is Revealed Truth. All other truth, whether in the form of non-Christian religion, or of non-Christian philosophy, is classified—and on the pre-suppositions of the system it must be classified—as “Natural Theology”. Within the system the exclusive place of Christianity is secure, and it is not difficult to understand that, to many thoughtful persons who have not had occasion to look below the surface of the theological history of the last two centuries, Thomism should present itself as a strong tower of defence in a day of trouble.

The revived Confessionalism which of late has made such rapid advances in the Protestant Communions of

the Continent of Europe is at least to this extent in agreement with Roman Theology that it seeks to maintain, as against the historical theology of the last century, the exclusive supernatural character of the Christian Religion as the revealed Word of God. But the new Protestantism is not a mere fundamentalist reaction. Its leaders have passed through the historical disciplines of Biblical study, and they are alive, not only to certain spiritual requirements of the present age, but also to the necessity of taking account of the critical study of the Bible. It is indeed a distinguishing feature of this school that it utilises the very defects of the "earthen vessels" of the Bible texts to enhance the value of the heavenly treasure which they contain. A distinguished New Testament scholar such as Bultmann makes the radical and negative conclusions of his Biblical criticism—too radical and too negative, as I must needs think—subserve an apologetic purpose, inasmuch as the very meagreness of the genuine knowledge which he will allow to us is used to divert our interest from Jesus as a figure in history to Jesus as the revealing Word of God disclosed to the eye of illuminated faith. History—even religious history—is deliberately secularised, and the Christian religion lives only in the categories of sin, faith and redemption.

While the problems of the Churches and of theologians are being viewed in this light, old issues as to the place and the justification of a "Natural Theology" in a Christian scheme have once again come to occupy the forefront of theological interest. Thus on the Protestant side it is asked whether the Catholic claim for Natural Theology, that it is entitled to a relatively independent status alongside

Revealed Truth, can be rightly maintained. If this claim is explicitly disallowed, as it is by the neo-Protestantism, the question is then raised what place, if any, can be found within a Christian Theology for a true knowledge of God other than the knowledge which depends directly upon the Christian Revelation.

In this controversy it chiefly concerns us here to note the tendency among all parties in the debate to assume what might be thought to be most in need of examination and defence, viz. the old concept of Christianity as *the* supernaturally revealed Religion. In the case of Roman Catholic divines this is less to be wondered at, for Roman Theology has never abandoned the old proofs from miracle and prophecy as unique guarantees of the direct action of God in Revelation. With this defence in reserve Roman Theologians can allow a wide room for non-Christian thought and non-Christian religion and can concede them a large measure of validity on the clear understanding that they are always classified as Natural, i.e. unrevealed Religion. This classification is so clearly dictated by the initial assumption that it can scarcely be expected to command general assent. The distinction between "Natural Theology" in the sense of a rational world view, and Revelation as inspired or prophetic vision into the nature of things, certainly in itself corresponds to a genuine difference of approach. But the question remains, why should such seeming prophetic insight as is found outside the Christian Scripture and tradition be classified as "Natural Theology", when internal characteristics suggest rather a form of Revelation—imperfectly apprehended perhaps, perhaps actually



distorted, but differing in quality and degree rather than in kind from the recognised Revelation of Scripture? No doubt the consequences of such an admission would be serious and they explain the unwillingness of Roman Theology to allow such data to rise beyond the status of "Natural Religion". But in adopting this policy Roman Theology merely shelves the problem.

It is much harder to see how a non-Roman Theology which is not prepared to be "Fundamentalist" in its attitude to the Bible can permanently and in principle restrict the category of Revelation to the Bible, and if that restriction is once lifted the problems with which Troeltsch grappled must again engage the attention of theologians. It is a safe prophecy that these questions will not be forgotten, for the issue as to the place of Christianity among the religions of the world has already sunk deep into the common consciousness, and it cannot be settled by the mere assertion that the Christian Gospel is the Word of God.

On the other hand we shall not promote the fruitful treatment of this issue by attenuating the distinctive conception of the mode of Revelation which is characteristic of the Old and New Testaments. In both parts of the Christian Scriptures God is represented as disclosing his mind in and through events on the plane of history. Events are the occasion of prophetic activity, and the prophetic function is not merely to be an inspired teacher of morals, but to be an inspired interpreter of events. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). The same conception lives on in the New Testament,

where it receives a new and enhanced application. The culminating point of the Bible as Revelation is not only the attainment and proclamation of a supreme moral ideal—though this is included—but the embodiment of the Divine utterance and action in a historical person and an actual event. “The Word became flesh.” The greatness and the peculiar difficulties of the Christian faith are alike bound up with this linking of idea and fact. The difficulties which Christianity has repeatedly experienced in the necessary process of adjustment to philosophical ideas are balanced by the supreme advantage that the historical form of its faith gives it a definite and concrete standard which occupies time and space in the public world of history. For a religion which sets out to claim the allegiance of men diverse in status, character and understanding this is an inestimable gain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Temple. “It is true that ‘the typical medium of revelation is not the thinker but the seer’. But it is also true that the typical *locus* of revelation is not the mind of the seer but the historical event. And if the revelation is essentially an event or fact, then it can be perfectly definite, although it neither is nor can be exhaustively represented in propositions. Moreover, it can be a focus of unity for people whose interpretation of it is various.” *Nature, Man and God*, p. 318.

## VII

### *THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST*

The doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ can only properly be appropriated when it has been viewed in relation to the question of human destiny. It is possible to state and to defend views as to the destiny of mankind for which the Person of Jesus Christ has no relevance. But the converse does not hold: it is not possible to hold a proper belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ without raising the question of the destiny of mankind. For Incarnation is no self-explanatory idea. In the greatest Christian theologians, from the Apostle St Paul onwards, doctrine concerning God, doctrine concerning man and doctrine concerning Jesus Christ have made up an interrelated whole, and the opinion might be weightily defended from the history of doctrine that disaster dogs the attempt to define the Incarnate Person in himself. There is a dignity in the struggle of the fourth century for the Nicene Faith which is lacking to the succeeding controversies on the Incarnate Person, and it may be questioned whether the difference is not largely explained when we observe that for Athanasius the Incarnation of the Word is firmly viewed as God's redeeming action for the race and that Christology in the stricter sense holds a subordinate place in his thought. The later controversies, when the mode of the Incarnation was in the centre of interest, came to no decisive issue comparable with Nicaea, and the explanation may be that in trying to define the Incarnate Person

men had largely lost the wider horizon of God's purpose for mankind.

Be this as it may, the history of the Chalcedonian formula in modern as in ancient times has shown it to be controversial and ambiguous. Thus so stout a champion of conciliar orthodoxy as Bishop Gore, while expressing the opinion that the Chalcedonian formula needs no revision, finds it necessary to repudiate the mode of speech whereby the life of Christ on earth was represented as containing two consciousnesses and two wills. Now, however great our sympathy with this repudiation in itself, I do not see how the conclusion can be avoided that at this point Bishop Gore has come perilously close to contradicting the Tome of Leo which the Council of Chalcedon synodically endorsed and that he has directly incurred the anathema of the sixth ecumenical Council.<sup>1</sup> The truth is that except by sheer paradox it is almost impossible to avoid heresy in one direction or another. But Bishop Gore himself helps us to a profitable use of these definitions when he writes: "If we would justify [the Chalcedonian formula] we must recognise very frankly that the purpose of the dogmas was negative—to exclude certain fundamentally misleading interpretations of the

<sup>1</sup> Leo insists that each of the two natures retains in its integrity its own distinct operation within the one Person, and he assigns the various records of the Gospels to the one or to the other "nature": *Agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est; Verbo scilicet operante quod Verbi est, et carne exequente quod carnis est. Unum horum coruscat miraculis, aliud succumbit injuriis.* (Epistula dogmatica ad Flavianum, c. iv.) The sixth ecumenical Council affirmed that this necessitates the confession of two wills and two activities: δύο φυσικά θελήματὰ τε καὶ ἐνεργεῖαι δοξάζομεν πρὸς σωτηρίαν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου γένους καταλλήλως συντρέχοντα (Mansi, vol. xi, pp. 636 f.).

person of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> In other words the formulae can only be understood with the help of the heresies to which they were opposed. They do not in themselves yield us a positive faith. “For our positive conception of the Person of Jesus”—to quote Bishop Gore again—“we need constantly to study with unembarrassed eyes the picture in the Gospels and the doctrine of the Epistles.” It only remains to add that in order to maintain this unembarrassed gaze, we must keep the conciliar definitions to their subordinate task of negating certain specific tendencies, and even be prepared on occasion with Bishop Gore definitely to contradict them. For the negations of one age may in the context of another age defeat the very aim they were originally designed to subserve. Thus that conception of two natures and two wills functioning side by side, which we find so strangely inapplicable to the Jesus of the Gospel texts, was, in the context of fifth-century thought, directly calculated to preserve the imperilled truth of the real humanity of the historic Christ.

The apostolic writers knew nothing of these pitfalls. Filled with a new-found faith which brought them near to God, sustained by the hope of eternal life in the new age to come, and actuated by the love of God made known in Jesus Christ, they preached to men the Christ who had now at last appeared, who had suffered the supreme ignominy of crucifixion, who had nevertheless been divinely vindicated and who was to come again as God’s vicegerent and judge of all mankind. The internal problems of the infant Churches centred upon such questions as the relation of the new Israel to the old, the obligation

<sup>1</sup> C. Gore, *Belief in Christ*, p. 228.

or non-obligation of the Mosaic Law, the ethical demands on pagan converts. These issues strained the loyalties of believers and taxed the statesmanship of the Apostles. On the other hand there is no sign, so far as our evidence reaches, of any controversial interest in the doctrine of the person of the Messiah—not at any rate until we reach the latest strata of the New Testament literature when docetic tendencies begin to call for correction. In the first age of the Church faith found varied and spontaneous expression. Certain factors are constant. A tradition of the mission, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth will always have been present in the apostolic preaching.<sup>1</sup> The return of this same Jesus is constantly expected, and there is always the belief, at first instinctive and undeveloped, that Jesus was God's pre-ordained agent for the judgment of the world and the salvation of God's elect. The New Testament writings show that this common faith could express itself along different and even inconsistent lines of thought. A common attitude of faith towards a Messiah, who in the fullness of time had actually appeared upon the stage of history, united believers, but believers were not yet in possession of any one accepted theory as to his Person or his relation to God. The Churches and their teachers served themselves of ideas already current as occasion arose and as problems presented themselves.

But if the Christians of the first age were not on their guard against Christological heresy, on the other hand they were not free to develop their faith in Christ without

<sup>1</sup> This point is admirably enforced by Prof. C. H. Dodd in his little book *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*.

a primary regard to the monotheistic presuppositions which they shared with the parent faith of Judaism. This monotheistic background limited the language and conditioned the thought of the New Testament writers. Eighteenth-century theologians such as Dr Samuel Clarke made a permanent contribution when they showed that the "Scripture doctrine of the Trinity" and the received orthodox statement of the doctrine were not identical. Broadly speaking Dr Clarke proves his case so far as exegesis of the New Testament is concerned. We cannot be sure that any New Testament writer has entertained the notion of distinctions internal to the Godhead. When the writers of the New Testament speak of God they mean the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. When they speak of Jesus Christ, they do not speak of him, nor do they think of him as God. He is God's Christ, God's Son, God's Wisdom, God's Word. Even the Prologue to St John, which comes nearest to the Nicene Doctrine, must be read in the light of the pronounced subordinationism of the Gospel as a whole; and the Prologue is less explicit in Greek with the anarthrous θεός than it appears to be in English.<sup>1</sup> The strength of Waterland's reply to Clarke is theological not exegetical. Waterland's main contention is that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and that alone

<sup>1</sup> The adoring exclamation of St Thomas "my Lord and my God" (Joh. xx. 28) is still not quite the same as an address to Christ as being without qualification God, and it must be balanced by the words of the risen Christ himself to Mary Magdalene (v. 17): "Go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." Jesus Christ is frequently spoken of in the Ignatian Epistles as "our God", "my God", but probably never as "God" without qualification. Cf. Ign. *Ephes.* 1, *Trall.* 7 with Lightfoot's notes *ad loc.*

can prevent the confession of Christ's Divinity from imperilling the truth of monotheism. The objection to which these triumphant demonstrations are exposed is that they carry us too easily and too quickly to our goal. The argument derives such cogency as it possesses from a logical and quasi-mathematical procedure, which leaves out of account all the actual considerations which have led men to affirm the unity of God and the Divinity of Jesus Christ his Son. We have assuredly left behind not only the language but the deeper motives of the New Testament Faith when the confession of the Divinity of Jesus Christ can be felt to constitute some kind of threat to the faith in one God, and when to circumvent this threat it is proved to be necessary to forge the highly technical concepts of οὐσία and ὑπόστασις.

Yet this is not to say that Dr Clarke's doctrine is to be preferred. On the contrary, his doctrine is not more but less satisfactory than Waterland's. Dr Clarke's real achievement is something different from what he set out to achieve. His aim was to restore the true and original doctrine of the Scripture. Acting on the principle that "the Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants" he goes direct to the Scriptural texts, examines their plain meaning and translates them into a system of doctrine. The system thus reached he puts forward as a substitute for that later and different system, which the Church, as it seemed, had itself substituted for the original Revelation. It was the ideal of a profoundly unhistorical age and the actual outcome of Clarke's effort is undoubtedly open to grave theological objection. Though it is true that he is often nearer to the thought-



forms of the Scriptural writers than his orthodox critics, it is not an extravagance to argue that the orthodox doctrine does better preserve the real intentions and implications of the New Testament than Clarke's attempted return to a supposed Scriptural system. Clarke's doctrine and his efforts at doctrinal revision of liturgical forms are now forgotten and it is not in the least likely that they will be resuscitated. Yet he has made his contribution. The enduring outcome of work such as his is that it indirectly established the fact of a doctrinal development.<sup>1</sup>

Clarke and Waterland are still in the stage when Revelation is conceived of as the communication of propositional truths, infallibly guaranteed. The task of the theologian for them is in principle nothing else than the

<sup>1</sup> The idea of doctrinal development was not of course entirely unknown before. The Jesuit Father Petavius's *Opus de theologicis dogmatibus* (1644-52) had called attention to the fluctuating statements of ante-Nicene Fathers with regard to the Person of the Word. See *op. cit. De Trinitate*, I, 5, 7 and especially I, 8, 2. "In ea vero professione quod supra memoravi planissime constat germanum Platonium Arium extitisse; tum illorum veterum (i.e. certain ante-Nicene Fathers) secutum esse dogma, qui, *nondum patefacta constitutaque re*, ad eundem errorem offenderunt. Nam et illi productum a Deo Patre Verbum, non tamen ex aeternitate, docuerunt, sed antiquam mundum fabricaret, ut illo administro ad huius molitionem operis uteretur." But the main outcome in the seventeenth century of Father Petavius's bold assertion was to provide ammunition for Arianising tendencies in doctrine on the one hand; and on the other to elicit from the great Anglican Bishop Bull his defence of the essential unchangeableness and identity of the doctrines witnessed by the Fathers. The hint of development was not taken seriously. It was the systematic attempt at the beginning of the Enlightenment to construct a Scripture system of doctrine over against the received orthodoxy which more directly prepared the way for the historical treatment of doctrine by Semler and later by the great German historians of the nineteenth century. Hence perhaps the strange omission of Petavius's name in the Introduction to Harnack's *History of Dogma* and the surprising inadequacy of the one reference to him in Loofs' *Leitfaden* (4th edition, p. 2).

elucidation of the real meaning of Scripture and the framing of a system of theological truth which rests either upon Scriptural texts or upon necessary inferences from Scriptural texts. The change which passed over the concept of Revelation with the application of the historical method to the Bible inevitably entailed a change in Christology. Theologians of the nineteenth century recognise the Bible, and supremely Jesus Christ himself, as normative for the historic faith. But since for them infallibility no longer attaches to the written word, the scholastic method is superseded and the data of Scripture are not, as such, immune from criticism.

For High Lutherans such as Hengstenberg and High Anglicans such as Pusey and Liddon, whose minds were firmly set in the traditional modes of thought, it was inevitable that the change should appear to be an abandonment of Christianity itself, and their misgivings were not allayed by a closer scrutiny of the constructive teaching of the new schools. The abandonment of the old concept of Revelation was accompanied by a weakening of the faith in a transcendent God which had been so close a counterpart to the traditional idea of Revelation. When the documents of Revelation were brought within the scope of human history and were found to be amenable to the historical method, it became natural to look for God within and not beyond the processes of history and that world order in which history was unfolded. Thus for Schleiermacher the Person of the Redeemer is the supreme instance in history of an unimpaired God-consciousness, and when Schleiermacher speaks of God-consciousness it is not clear that he means by God a supreme creative

mind. Even in the later *Glaubenslehre* the influence of Spinoza persists: God is the unity of the manifold variety which appears to us as the world, and the distinctions which orthodox Christian doctrine has asserted as distinctions within the Godhead are distinctions only for our human consciousness. Thus the underlying tendency of Schleiermacher's doctrine is in the direction of Pantheism. Hegel likewise interprets the conception of God in purely immanental terms. The orthodox insistence upon distinctions within the Godhead has indeed a true counterpart in the Hegelian doctrine of the Trinity, but this is only secured at the cost of bringing the Divine being wholly within the process of the world.

It has been the abiding achievement of this tendency in the Theology of the early nineteenth century that it served to establish once again a vital link between theology and the actual life and experience of men. The growth of knowledge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of which the French *Encyclopaedia* was the symbol—a growth which, as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were to prove, was yet in its first stages—had even then transformed the old picture of the world which had served the purposes of earlier ages. In consequence Theology was in danger of losing all contact with the mind of the time, and so long as God was conceived, in the manner of most eighteenth-century Theology, as purely transcendent—the possible yet ever doubtful source of an alleged revelation—it was impossible for Theology to address itself to the problems which called aloud for an answer. The reaction to immanence was salutary and indeed essential. As a vindication of the religious significance of the world in

which our lot is cast, it has value not only for its own age, but for ours as well. But the Romantic Theology was too much under the influence of certain philosophical preconceptions to be satisfactory in other respects when judged as an interpretation of the New Testament doctrine of Christ.

An appeal to the New Testament will not be declined by a Theology which claims to be Christian. We may recall a measured saying of that wise and far-sighted man Dr Hort. Hort has been arguing that actual Christianity was not and never had been a single fixed body of belief; that, while "certain modifications of doctrine have been more widely current in different ages, and in different places in the same age, than others", yet when we turn to the greater Theologians we find that these "isolated but not isolating voices" break up the surface harmony of the doctrine of the time, and often reflect "the inarticulate feelings of the simply devout". "But", he continues, "no possible modification can be accepted as Christianity which contradicts the broad testimony of Scripture, and requires the re-writing of its most distinctive passages."<sup>1</sup> An appeal to the New Testament of this nature does not involve us in the impossible attempt to transfer the affirmations of Scripture whole and entire from the historical environment in which they were first written into the very different circumstances of another age, but it does mean that a Christian Theologian must seek to understand, appropriate and convey afresh the essential motives which lie behind those Apostolic teachings.

In the New Testament three thoughts stand out which

<sup>1</sup> F. J. A. Hort, *The Way the Truth the Life*, p. 186.

we may fairly expect to find a place in the Church's doctrine of its Lord.

I. It will scarcely be doubted that belief in God as creative mind and will behind, as well as within, the world of sense experience was a ruling conviction of the Apostolic writers, as it was of the Judaism from which historically Christianity is sprung.

II. Nor again will it be seriously disputed that for all the writers of the New Testament Scriptures the significance of Jesus Christ lay in the relation in which he was believed to stand to this creative mind and will. The significance of Jesus Christ is not in himself. We might hesitate to use so bald a negative, were it not a true paraphrase of a central Johannine utterance: "My teaching", says Christ in St John, "is not mine, but his that sent me." If Jesus Christ is not apprehended as the Revelation of God beyond, he is not, from the New Testament point of view, apprehended at all. Even a doctrine of Incarnation—of God manifest in the flesh—may miss the essential Christian note, if it is not held within the governing principle that the Incarnation has its meaning as a revelation in time of the Eternal God.

III. Thirdly, it must be acknowledged that the chief Apostolic writers affirm a conviction that he who was Jesus Christ was also the Divine agent in the creation of the world.

These are stupendous assertions. If indeed there were a Revelation, in the sense of a direct communication by Omniscience of truths which lie beyond the compass of man's reason, the communication of such truths as these would be a fitting occasion for God's exercise of his

power. And it is intelligible that, when Theologians were no longer in a position to work with this concept of Revelation, these thoughts should fall into the background. The leading Theologians of the early nineteenth century were almost all influenced, though in varying ways, by an idealistic philosophy which interpreted reality in terms of knowing mind, and this often served them as a substitute for a cosmology in terms of Divine Creation. Christianity itself was to them a spiritual movement—the supreme spiritual movement—in the history of mankind, and while this approach allowed a place of high significance to the historical Jesus Christ, it did not make it natural to think of him, after the manner of the traditional Theology, as beginning and end of the series of events in time.

A limitation similar, but not identical, may be recognised in Ritschl's thought of Christ. Here certain fundamental Biblical conceptions come into their own. The Divine will and purpose become the ruling conception and the doctrine of Jesus Christ is firmly placed in this its true context. To know and to embrace the true end of God for man and to hold it fast in victory over the world—such is the life of the true Christian. Nor is the victory a mere achievement of his own, for the individual only wins his foothold in the realised purpose of God as he becomes incorporate in the household of faith, and this household of faith originates with, and depends upon the historical Figure of Jesus Christ. Thus in the Ritschlian Theology Jesus Christ is the founder of the Kingdom of God in the history of man. This conception dominates, and, we must add, unduly limits Ritschl's Christology. Alike in his historical confidence and in his distrust of

metaphysics Ritschl accurately reflects the situation of Christian Theology in the second half of the nineteenth century. He is confident that the faith of his own age can directly utilise historical data yielded by the critical study of the Bible. Jesus Christ on earth, an object of true historical knowledge, is the source and origin of Christian faith in God. Nor should Christians look for any knowledge of God from any other source.

The historical objection to Ritschl's use of the New Testament term "The Kingdom of God" has already been referred to. An equally serious difficulty is involved in the obscure, but fundamental distinction between theoretical judgments and judgments of value, and the restriction of the confession of Christ's Divinity to the class of judgments of value. It may be, and I am sure that it is, legitimate to maintain that a judgment of value must enter into the confession of Christ's Divinity, but it seems fair that we should be pressed to say whether we hold that the value for us corresponds to a self-existent reality. If we answer in the affirmative, then in principle it should be right to affirm the Divinity of Christ as a theoretical judgment, even though we allow that the judgment of value is indispensable as a preliminary to the conclusion. When Apostolic writers said what they did say about Jesus Christ, undoubtedly they were expressing the value that Jesus had for them, but it is not less certain that they were firmly realist in the sense that they believed him to stand in a unique existential relation to God. This belief does indeed cohere with the judgment that for believers Christ has the value of God, but how much more than that value-judgment is involved in the belief becomes evident

in the New Testament doctrine of Christ's office as Judge. The existential relation to God which lay behind his saving activity towards believers made him a matter of concern not only to believers but to all mankind. He was "the man whom God had ordained to judge the world". The literature of the first two Christian centuries, and not least the works of the Greek apologists, shows the prominent part which this conviction played in the Christian preaching to the pagan world. The Church did not preach itself. It did not say: "Put yourselves within the fellowship of faith, and you will learn within that fellowship the power of faith, derived from Christ, to overcome the world"; but rather: "Whatever comes, the Just and Holy God is going to pass judgment upon you all by Jesus Christ his Son. Repent therefore; let Christ, who is to be your Judge, be also your Saviour; wash away your sins and guilt in Christian Baptism, and henceforth in the fellowship of the Church live the life of a faithful disciple." Ritschl is right inasmuch as redemption not judgment is the deeper truth and the final purpose of the Incarnation, for "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (John iii. 17). Yet the Christian doctrine of redemption must itself be misconceived if we forget that for St John as for other Christians Jesus Christ is the world's Judge. "For judgment came I into this world, that they which see not may see; and that they which see may become blind" (*ib.* ix. 39). The New Testament doctrine of redemption issues from a prior doctrine of judgment. In its reassertion of the doctrine of Divine judgment the 'Dialectical Theology' is recovering a vital factor in the Theology of the New Testament.



A great change has passed over the mind of Europe in the last generation. We have been living near enough to a possible collapse of civilisation to realise that our hold upon the achievements of the past is precarious and that our prospects in the next chapter of history are uncertain. The idea of evolutionary progress, whatever its justification may be, is no longer the natural expression of an habitual thought. Moreover, we have become critical of the popular faith of the last century which looked vaguely for the satisfaction of its hope in a temporal future. Although mankind may reasonably expect a long—a very long—tenure on the planet, yet it appears certain that, for the race as for the individual, the tenure is limited, and a Golden Age in the future must at long last prove a mockery not only to the generations which will have passed without seeing it, but also to the happy age for which it may be reserved. Reflections such as these do not establish the truth of an eternal world, nor do they necessarily encourage men to look for it. They may foster a tendency to shut out the distant horizon and to sink heart and soul in the concrete tasks of the present. But if men do look beyond the present, they are often prepared to agree that men's needs are only satisfied if, with the writer to the Hebrews, they are able to expect "an abiding city" which, in some way that passes our understanding, may include while it transcends the whole process of history.

This new setting to our problems lies behind some more recent essays in Christological Doctrine which have been inspired by the 'Dialectical Theology'. For this theology the transcendence of God is the essential starting-point, and it controls the exposition of the doc-

trine of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is not so much a doctrine of the union of Godhead and Manhood in a historical person, but is rather to be thought of as the Revelation through the medium of a human personality of the Divine Eternal Word; for we must avoid giving any countenance to the dangerous idea that man on the level of historical experience and by means of reflection on historical experience may attain to the Divine. This can never be. "Personality", writes Brunner, "is the flowering of humanity. In a very special sense this is true of the religious-ethical personality, of the inner life. Personal religious-ethical experience constitutes the inmost line of history; it is no less than this—but really it is also no more; it is never revelation, or redemption. For in the inmost depths of personality there dwells not God, but sin."<sup>1</sup> Thus it follows that "revelation is quite remote from this whole plane of existence; genuine revelation is something totally different. It is a prophetic word from beyond this human and personal plane of existence. And if the revelation belongs to a higher category than this 'word', then it belongs to the realm of Divine Being, Divine Nature, Divine Authority. It lies behind the whole realm of personality, even behind the 'interior life' of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Brunner creates a new terminology to convey his Christological doctrine. He distinguishes Person and personality. The personality of Jesus is that element which is generally accessible, and it includes the "interior life" of his ethical and religious experience. But this does not carry us beyond the merely human. The secret of

<sup>1</sup> E. Brunner, *The Mediator* (English trans.), p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 266.

Jesus, which can only be known by those to whom it is "given", lies beyond the human personality in the Divine Person. Person is a category which can only be understood within the content of Revelation. Like the prophets Jesus reveals the Divine Word, but his relation to the Word is other than theirs, for in him and in him alone the Word is Person. The relation of Person to personality in Jesus remains mysterious and we are not intended to probe too deeply with the merely human understanding, for it is faith alone "which knows the meaning of the mystery of the Person or the authority of the Revelation". It may be said that Brunner's lengthy treatment of the doctrine of the Mediator is written in its entirety around this basic thought. Difficult as it is to catch the precise nuance of the term "Person" the fundamental aim is clear: critics and historians may elucidate and interpret the "personality" but the "Person" is revealed to Faith alone. Thus Brunner seeks to win emancipation from the limitations of history in order to preserve the conception of a transcendent Revelation from on high.

The tendency in doctrine of which Brunner is a conspicuous exponent has recovered a moment in Christian thinking which was in grave danger of obscurization. Monotheistic religion must think of God as supreme, "high and lifted up", beyond and above the world; and when the Christian religion ascribes Divinity to Jesus Christ it must think of him too as beyond and above the world. But this has not been and it is not now the only operative factor in Christian faith. Historical event and historical personality have been the medium of revelation, and if the self-disclosure of God thus mediated is to

be appropriated by human beings who themselves live on the plane of historical experience, then we require some other image to express the impact of Revelation upon the world than the parabola issuing from a mysterious beyond to which, after a brief tangential contact with the world, it returns. Christian religion is concerned with man's relation to God and also, in proper subordination thereto, with his relation to the world. It is congruous with this two-fold function of the Divine disclosure in Jesus Christ, that the Christian religion, for all that it must issue in a recognition of God and of Christ with God as beyond the world of time and of becoming, yet springs from genuine human experiences which are within the world, even when they point beyond it. Revelation is not so much Revelation of a supernatural otherwise wholly unknown but rather a Way which enables man to relate himself aright to the whole universe with which he is in contact—physical, moral and religious in the light of a Person accepted by faith as ultimate and supreme. If we start out from such a standpoint the idea of the God-Man need not be, as Brunner challengingly describes it, “a monstrosity”;<sup>1</sup> on the contrary the association of the Revelation with events and with a personality with which mere historians may rightly concern themselves, may be recognised as peculiarly appropriate. Certainly the Scriptures of the Christian religion, viewed as we must now view them, show us the belief in God as creator and in Christ as agent in creation, springing from experiences and events in the order of history, and I shall now argue that without attention to this historical experience, the nature and

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 406.

the meaning of these beliefs must be radically misconceived.

We must start with some preliminary consideration of the Old Testament, for Christianity came to birth within the circle of the Jewish faith, and the monotheistic belief of the parent Church is the premiss of all Christian doctrine. Biblical scholarship has shown us that this monotheism was an acquired not an original possession of the Hebrew people. Even with the Prophets in the earlier period it is but rarely that we find utterances which express the thought of God as Nature's author, and in some of the few passages where the thought appears there is good reason to suspect the hand of a later editor. For these early Prophets Jehovah is primarily the just and holy King of Israel who controls the destinies of Israel and of the other peoples of the earth. But if the prophetic faith was to maintain itself, it was bound in a more reflective age and in the light of a wider experience to relate its conviction of God's just and holy rule to the world of nature as well as to the world of man. Myths of creation were prevalent in Babylonia. If the High and Holy One were to take a place amid the divine beings of the antique cosmogonies, could he remain the High and Holy One? The Biblical doctrine that the world is the creation of the one true God is clearly articulated—perhaps for the first time—by the nameless prophet of the exile (Deutero-Isaiah xl-lv), and we may fairly surmise that it was the prophet's answer to this dilemma. The Biblical doctrine of Divine creation is not a direct communication from the creator, nor yet is it, like the Aristotelian doctrine, the keystone of a metaphysical system. We may find its source

in such a passage as the song of the Seraphs in Isaiah's vision:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory (Isaiah vi).

That is not yet a doctrine of creation though it looks towards it. The doctrine of creation by God comes later, conveying a conception of the Divine being in relation to the world of nature which permits that song to be sung with full force and meaning.

In the Scriptures of the New Testament we may trace a movement of faith which is in some respects analogous to that which carried the Old Testament Theology to its culminating point; but in the New Testament it is a movement of faith centred upon Jesus Christ. In the matured Theology of the Apostolic Church—at any rate in its chief representatives—Jesus Christ is one with the creative Word of God: "In him", says St Paul, "all things consist" (Col. i. 17); again in St John Jesus Christ is the Word which became flesh, and through the Word all things that are were made (John i. 1-18). The evidence indicates that at the end of the first Christian century this type of doctrine was not universal. On the other hand there is no sign of abrupt transition in the development by which St Paul and others reached these stupendous affirmations concerning Jesus Christ and his relation to the world. St Paul's doctrine of a cosmic Christ seems to have asserted itself without inward strain. Yet it was a change from the primitive faith. Christianity did not start with a new cosmic doctrine. The Gospels show us that for Jesus of Nazareth, as for his disciples, the doctrine of God as creator, "Lord of Heaven and earth" stood

firm. It is as certain as anything historical can be that Jesus did not say of himself that he was God's agent or co-agent in creation, and it is scarcely less certain that no such idea was present to his mind. It is remarkable testimony to the broad historical fidelity of the synoptic tradition that no such speculation is ever placed upon his lips, and even in St John the doctrine of the Cosmic Word, plainly stated in the Prologue, falls almost—perhaps entirely—out of sight in the narrative of the Incarnate life. The significant terms of thought in the Gospel are not cosmological and, if we weigh the traditions of the Baptist and of Jesus himself, it is not doubtful what they were: sin, repentance, judgment to come, sin forgiven, the victory of the Father's love, the blessedness of the Kingdom, now hidden in men's hearts, to be gloriously revealed hereafter. Comparison with the Old Testament shows the essential identity of the prophetic and the evangelical religion and at the same time the new and distinctive features of the Gospel. Whereas an Isaiah stands himself as penitent with the sinful nation over against the holiness of the Lord of Hosts, Jesus Christ is found to stand on the other side of the chasm—or rather, stranger still, he is on both sides at once: “the friend of publicans and sinners”, yet also “the holy one of God”. That kind of impression must go back to the very beginning, and it must have been very nearly, though not quite, at the beginning that the disciples found here—in this chasm which separated them, yet did not separate them, from their master—the true explanation of the crucifixion.

This is the necessary starting-point. Without it the New Testament affirmations concerning Jesus Christ as agent

in creation must remain to us mere riddles. But if we make this our starting-point, it seems possible to see how natural, how necessary, and how right the further doctrine is. No doubt the Church was helped towards its belief in a cosmic Christ, by the concepts of a Divine Word and Wisdom, more or less personified, which were already current in Hellenistic Judaism, but these concepts do not themselves explain how Christians came to associate cosmic functions with a historical man. We must look for some inner logic which carried the Church onward to the faith of St Paul and St John.

The eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans seems to show us the nature of this movement towards faith in a cosmic Christ. St Paul's doctrine originates in the complex of ideas associated with Judgment, Sin, Condemnation, Justification, Grace, but in the end it passes beyond this complex. If it be indeed true, St Paul argues, that there is no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus; if God for our sake has not spared Jesus his Son; then it cannot but be that with him he will freely give us all things. The great outburst with which the eighth chapter of the Romans ends still stops short of a formal statement that Christ is the agent in creation, but when St Paul has proclaimed his persuasion that the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord is the sovereign power, to which all things created must yield place, the way has been opened for the belief that through Christ all things created came to be.

The doctrine of a cosmic Christ is thus a development from the earliest form of faith, but, if the first step in faith was a right one, it was a right development. And if the



relationship of man to God in Christ is to maintain itself, it must carry with it in our day as at the beginning, an attitude not only towards God and Christ, but also to the world. The world will not be denied. The affirmation that all things were made by him who became flesh in Jesus Christ is certainly not a conclusion which can be established by philosophical reflection, still less by observation and experiment, independently of a relationship to Christ; but with relationship to Christ as a starting-point faith may and must advance to include the wide world in its embrace.

The evidence of man's experience in the world as to the nature of the power which controls his destiny is in itself ambiguous. There are objections to every attitude which may be taken. The existence of evil, moral and physical, is an ever-present obstacle to the belief that a good God is the source and goal of the world. On the other hand the existence of moral standards of which man is aware is an objection of at least equal weight against the hypothesis that the ultimate reality is morally indifferent. It is a weighty consideration in support of Christian faith that while the existence of a moral law "written in the heart" is one of its chief foundations, its most distinctive doctrines are associated with a conquest of evil and especially of moral evil or sin. The "preaching of the Cross" may not be a complete theoretical Theodicy, but it has proved itself powerful to

... assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

In the crucifixion of Jesus Christ the seeming victory of

evil is transformed into the supreme manifestation of good. Sin viewed as a mere fact outside oneself may seem to constitute a serious objection to belief in a Providential ordering of the world, but actual consciousness of sin will always afford the surest approach to belief in God, and the chief clue to the Christian confession of the Divinity of Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Central as this belief in a Divine victory over evil must always be, Christian Theology need not disdain the support of other aspects of experience which, if they do not necessarily involve belief in one supreme mind, are most satisfactorily accounted for when they are integrated with Theistic belief. The concept of sin, though necessary, is itself a subordinate notion, for it is correlative to a concept of perfection, and it is consciousness of a standard of perfection which gives definition to human consciousness of sin. Moreover, awareness of ideal ends is not invariably associated with personal consciousness of sin. "Theologians", wrote Wordsworth, "may puzzle their heads about dogmas as they will, the religion of gratitude cannot mislead us. Of that we are sure, and gratitude is the handmaid to hope, and hope the harbinger of faith. I look abroad upon Nature, I think of the best part of our species, I lean upon my friends, and I meditate upon the Scriptures, especially the Gospel of St John, and my creed rises up of itself, with the ease of an exhalation, yet

<sup>1</sup> Compare this saying of Mandell Creighton: "We need seriously to consider whether harm has not been done by the prominence given in our day to the doctrine of the Incarnation over the doctrine of the Atonement. It weakens the sense of sin, which is one of the great bulwarks against unbelief, and through which we live into a larger world." *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, vol. II, p. 506.

a fabric of adamant.”<sup>1</sup> This was no superficial optimism, for Wordsworth had looked death and evil in the face; nor is his utterance the less Christian because Nature and friendship find a place together with the Scriptures as occasions of gratitude and grounds of faith. The Seer of the Apocalypse keeps the balance true when to the Seraphs’ song

Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts,

he adds the confession of the Church:

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain . . .

and to both the hymn of the creation:

Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth...heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Sir George Beaumont, 28 May 1825. Quoted in Miss E. C. Batho, *The later Wordsworth*, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation v.



## INDEX OF NAMES

- Ambrose, St, 72  
 Amos, 117  
 Aristotle, 137  
 Arius, 125n.  
 Athanasius, St, 79, 119  
 Augustine, St, 72  
  
 Barth, Karl, 12, 17, 26  
 Baur, F. C., 52, 83  
 Bosanquet, B., 7  
 Boys Smith, J. S., ix, 79n.  
 Bradley, F. H., 7  
 Bretschneider, K. G., 52  
 Brock, W., 8  
 Bruce, A. B., 75  
 Brunner, E., 17, **36-38**, 81, 98,  
     **134-136**  
 Bull, G., 65, 125n.  
 Bultmann, R., 115  
 Bury, J. B., 106f.  
  
 Caird, E., 56-57  
 Calvin, J., 16  
 Cassirer, E., 3f.  
 Chillingworth, W., 65  
 Clarke, Samuel, 65, 66, **123-125**  
 Coleridge, S. T., 6, 17, 19, 39, 68  
 Creighton, M., 142n.  
 Cyril, St, of Alexandria, 79n.  
  
 Daniel, Book of, 107  
 Delitzsch, F., 76  
 Dilthey, W., 25  
 Dodd, C. H., 122n.  
 Dorner, I. A., 52, **80-81**  
  
 Ebrard, J. H. A., 76  
 Episcopus, S., 65  
 Eliot, George, 69  
 Ewing, A. C., 7  
  
 Fairbairn, A. M., 75  
  
 Gibbon, E., 17  
 Godet, F., 76  
 Gore, Charles, 78, 102, **120f.**  
  
 Hampden, R. D., 69  
 Harnack, A. von, 11, 17, 52,  
     **100f.**, 125n.  
*Hebrews, writer to the*, 35f., 94f.,  
     133  
 Hegel, G. W. F., 3f., **41-61**, 67,  
     84, 87, 95, 105, 127  
 Hengstenberg, E. W., 126  
 Hey, John, 14, 16, 66-67  
 Horsley, Samuel, 69  
 Hort, F. J. A., 91, 96, 128  
 Hume, David, 20  
 Husserl, E., 8  
  
 Ignatius, St, 123n.  
 Isaiah, Deutero-, 137  
 Isaiah, son of Amoz, 138, 139  
  
 John, St, Gospel according to,  
     32, 33, 35, 48f., 52f., 90, 123,  
     129, 132, **138-140**, 142  
 John, St, Revelation of, 143  
  
 Kant, Immanuel, 5f., 20, 21, 25,  
     89  
 Kierkegaard, S. A., 9, 105  
 Krüger, G., 59  
  
 Lachmann, K. K. F. W., 54  
 Lasson, G., 45, 51  
 Laud, William, 65  
 Law, Edmund, 13  
 Leo the Great, 72, 120  
 Lessing, G. E., 14, 24f.

- Liddon, H. P., 70-74, 102, 103f., 126  
 Lightfoot, J. B., 91, 96, 123n.  
 Locke, John, 14, 20  
 Loisy, A., 99  
 Loofs, F., 52, 79, 123n.  
 Luthardt, C. E., 76  
 Luther, Martin, 95  
  
 Mackintosh, H. R., 75  
 Mansel, H. L., 6  
 Mark, St, Gospel according to, 90  
 Marx, Karl, 58  
 Mary Magdalene, 123n.  
 Mary the Mother of Jesus, 28f.  
 Maurice, F. D., 6, 39, 70  
 Mill, J. S., 5  
 Mohammed, 27  
 Moses, 27, 73, 120  
 Muirhead, J. H., 19  
  
 Nietzsche, F. W., 9  
 Nestorius, 81  
 Newman, J. H., 68  
  
 Oakeshott, M., 7  
  
 Paley, William, 14  
 Pattison, Mark, 83  
 Paul, St, 33, 119, 138-140  
 Pearson, John, 66  
 Petavius, 65, 125n.  
 Priestley, Joseph, 69  
 Pusey, E. B., 126  
  
 Ranke, L. von, 87  
 Rashdall, H., 78f.  
  
 Ritschl, Albrecht, 62, 83-101, 130f.  
 Rutherford, T., 14  
  
 Sandius, C., 65  
 Schleiermacher, Friedrich, 3, 10, 17, 19-38, 41-44, 53, 57, 84, 85f., 88, 127  
 Schweitzer, A., 34f.  
 Seeley, Sir John, 96, 102  
 Semler, J. S., 20, 125n.  
 Sidgwick, H., 5  
 Sorley, W. R., 7  
 Spinoza, B., 127  
 Strauss, D. F., 52-56, 69f., 89  
  
 Tanqueray, A., 17  
 Temple, W., 75, 78, 118n.  
 Tertullian, 107  
 Thomas, St, the Apostle, 123n.  
 Thomas, St, Aquinas, 16, 114  
 Thomasius, G., 76-80  
 Troeltsch, E., 39, 109-113, 117  
 Tyrrell, G., 99  
  
 Virgil, 106  
  
 Ward, James, 7  
 Waterland, Daniel, 66, 123-125  
 Watson, Richard, 14-17, 43  
 Weiss, Johannes, 99  
 Westcott, B. F., 39, 91  
 Wilberforce, R. L., 70  
 Winstanley, D. A., 67  
 Wordsworth, William, 10, 19, 38f., 143  
  
 Zucker, D., 65

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